University of Alberta

Novice Principals' Perceptions of Preparedness

by

Constance E. Murphy

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of preparedness of novice principals. More specifically, the succession experiences and effective mechanisms of leadership training and development of one group of beginning principals who had received no preservice training and one group of first year principals who had received a training course in the principalship were explored.

The naturalistic method was used to address the research question. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six beginning principals. These data were analyzed deductively and inductively.

The findings of the study indicated that, although all first-year principals had similar perceptions of their preparedness, the forms of training and development deemed most beneficial were ranked differently. As well, factors influencing their succession experiences were discerned.

Recommendations are made regarding how aspirant principals and beginning principals ought to be prepared, assisted, and supported.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Principal succession is the act or process of replacing the leader in a school. It is a natural and widespread phenomenon occurring in school administration which brings with it changes in the operation and function of a school (Hart, 1993). Because success and effectiveness are linked to the quality of leadership provided by a principal, what Ogawa and Smith (1985) refer to as "the major factor in determining the overall performance of an organization" (p. 1), the dynamics inherent in principal succession and the events related to this organizational change are important considerations on three levels; (a) the organization, (b) the newly-appointed principal, and (c) the stakeholder communities.

Current trends indicate that individuals new to the field of educational administration will be called upon to replace experienced principals who leave their assignments due to retirement and attrition (Stelck, 1997). As principals hold key positions in school effectiveness (Hart, 1993), the need for succession planning, a process implemented to ensure that capable, qualified personnel are ready to step in to perform duties required in an organization (Cembrowski, 1997), has become increasingly apparent in the area of the principalship.

Experiences of first year principals provide a unique introduction into the world of administration in schools (Warren, 1989). Studies such as those conducted by Restine (1997) and Bolman and Deal (1992) indicate that novice principal preparedness is dependent on personal and task learning in the principalship. According to Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (1997), the performance of a leader requires technical skill, the ability to perform specialized tasks; interpersonal skill, the ability to work well with others; and conceptual skill, the ability to analyze and solve problems. In some cases, first year principals receive training and development education specifically designed for the principalship and, in other cases, "rookie" principals do not receive preservice training prior to entering the principalship.

In this frame of reference, this study has explored the readiness of novice principals for effecting the roles and responsibilities inherent to the principalship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of preparedness of newly appointed principals for their succession experiences and to gain insights regarding how educational and training programs can be enhanced and made more comprehensive for those aspiring to the principalship. Specifically, the purpose was to investigate the perceptions of preparedness of newly-appointed principals who had not received preservice leadership and development training and newly-appointed principals who had received training prior to entering the principalship. The intent of this study was to provide a "thick" description of the similarities and differences in succession experiences of six first year principals as they enter into complex, established organizations.

Identification of the Research Problem

This study was designed to address the question: how do newly-appointed principals with preservice training view their preparedness for effecting their roles and responsibilities within an established social organization as compared with newly-appointed principals with no specific training?

Sub-Problems

Two more specific questions were addressed within the purview of this larger question. Namely, from the perspectives of the newly-appointed principals:

1. How prepared are new principals who do not participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship?

2. How prepared are new principals who participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship?

Definition of Terms

To help the reader understand the various terms as they were used in the context of this study, the following definitions are provided.

Succession planning. A term referring to the any effort designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, or work group by making provision for the development and replacement of key people over time.

Principalship Training and Development. This term refers to courses designed to provide information about, exposure to, and experience with the various roles and responsibilities assigned to the principalship and to ensure that individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be effective leaders in their assigned workplace.

Professional socialization refers to the internalization of the norms, values, and behaviours generally accepted as part of the professional role and includes the knowledge, skills, and techniques needed to perform adequately as a school administrator (Hart, 1993).

Organizational socialization refers to the internalization of knowledge, values, dispositions, and behaviours required to fit into the cohesive work group and to adequately perform social roles within an organization. Organizational socialization includes the influences effected by a new leader on the existing school community and the school community's dynamic influences on the newly appointed principal (Hart, 1993).

Significance of the Study

My intention was to gain a greater understanding of the succession process as it was experienced by newly-appointed principals, an area that remains relatively unexplored. This study contributed to principal succession theory by identifying factors which influence leadership transition. The intent was to enhance awareness and understanding of the comprehensive succession process, and, ultimately, implement recommendations and invite further analysis of the process.

The findings emerging from the analysis of the data are useful in facilitating training opportunities to prepare novice principals for transition into their new roles. By assessing the perceptions of preparedness of these first time principals and by recognizing the beneficial sources of training as identified by the participants, compelling methods and additional mechanisms for providing leadership training and development were discerned.

The insights gained from this study are particularly relevant in light of the fact that many school districts are facing the same issue, replacing a large number of principals leaving the workforce. With the anticipated influx of new principals, school jurisdictions must prepare for and make available the opportunities to obtain knowledge and preservice experience to potential principals. This study provides information on how such training can be achieved.

Organization of the Thesis

The balance of this thesis is provided in five chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature on administrator succession with a focus on the principalship. Chapter Three describes the participants and the research method used to acquire and analyze the data. Chapter Four describes the findings, and Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature. Conclusions, recommendations, and personal reflections are presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is an overview of the literature related to administrator succession with a focus on the principalship in schools. It provides a definition of succession and describes the succession process as it applies to the principalship. It summarizes current thinking gained from recent publications on the foundations of principal succession, the need for succession planning in educational administration, assessment of traditional training programs, insights into strategies crucial to the training and development of potential principals, and issues faced by beginning principals. This review sets the context for my research problem which is to examine the perceptions of preparedness of novice principals with no preservice training and the perceptions of preparedness of newly-appointed principals having received a leadership training and development course prior to entering principalships.

Succession

Succession is the act or process of one person taking the place of another in an existing organization. In educational administration at the Kindergarten to grade 12 levels, succession occurs when the principal in a school, the formal leader, is replaced. Such a transition causes reverberations throughout the organization and its communities as it impacts on existing relationships, expectations, and outcomes (Brock & Grady, 1995, pp. x-xi; Hart, 1993, p. 5; Parkay & Hall, 1992). Because succession brings change and every school is different, each succession experience will perforce be unique in its approach, its execution, and its effects. Hart (1993) states that succession is one of the most common forms of organizational change (p. 16), bringing with it opportunities to alter and modify both the operation and function of a school.

Succession is a natural, regular, and widespread occurrence, providing unique perspectives on leadership: "Succession brings the issue of leadership close to the surface of organizational consciousness at all levels" (Hart, 1993, p. 1). It is generally accepted

that the success of a school is directly related to the quality of leadership provided by a principal: "the common wisdom that the leader is the major factor in determining the overall performance of an organization" (Ogawa & Smith, 1985, p.1).

Changing leaders often imports sources of new ideas to schools. Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) describe succession "as a generic organizational phenomenon" producing naturally occurring instabilities which, in turn, influence organizational processes and performance. The accepted view is that changing administrators will improve school performance, contributing new thinking and affirming beliefs. Ogawa and Smith (1985) remark that "people generally believe good things happen to schools and to principals when a change of principals is made" (p. 1). Hart (1985) cites Child and Keiser in explaining that succession brings with it changes that "center around the new personal and leadership style of the successor, redefine work and social patterns, establish new networks of communication within the school and within the environment, and open members' minds to new possibilities" (Child & Keiser, 1981, cited in Hart, 1985, p. 3). Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) explain another point of view: "In schools, the replacement of principals... is a disruptive event because it changes the lines of communication, realigns relationships of power, impacts decision-making, and generally disturbs the equilibrium of normal activities" (p. 2).

Succession Process

Succession is a process which occurs over time. Noonan and Goldman (1995) state that in order to understand principal succession, it is necessary to understand the context within which it occurs, "a sense of what happened before and during a succession," and its effects or outcomes. Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) provide a useful model (see Figure 1; adapted from Gordon & Rosen, 1981, cited in Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984) for analyzing the literature regarding succession and the school administrator. Their structure breaks down the succession process into major generalizations according to three chronological phases: a set of events that occur before the arrival of the successor into the

situation; a second set of events that occur once the new leader has taken office and begins to take charge; and a third set of indicators to measure the effects of succession (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984, pp. 3-4). They call these stages: (a) prearrival factors, (b) arrival factors, and (c) succession effects. This outline provides a multi-dimensional vehicle for understanding the implications of leadership succession on schools.

Figure 1. A Model for Leader Succession

Prearrival Factors	Arrival Factors	Succession Effects
Reason for Succession	Demography	Changes in Reputations
Selection Process	School Structures and Processes	Changes in Orientations
Reputations of Leaders	Educational Programs	Changes in Arrival Factors
Orientations of Leaders	Community	
	School Effectiveness	

Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p. 4; adapted from a model devised by Gordon & Rosen, 1981, cited in Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984)

Prearrival Factors

"A principal's succession affects all who work in and with a school" (Hart, 1993, p. 6). It raises a number of apprehensions regarding expectations and relationships on all of a school's communities including students, parents, staff, subordinates and superordinates.

Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p. 4) list prearrival factors as: (a) the reason for a succession, (b) selection process, (c) reputations of leaders, and (d) orientations of leaders. Initiation factors include the forces already in place within an organization and the accepted mode of operation within a school district. As well, the perceived characteristics and past experiences of the incumbent leader provide information and result in preconceived notions developed by members in the organization. Studies reporting prearrival factors (Fauske &

Ogawa, 1985; Ogawa & Smith, 1985; Hart, 1985; Macmillan, 1993; Noonan & Goldman, 1995) attribute importance to the established formal and informal contexts in which succession occurs.

Reason for succession. Principals are replaced for many reasons. Among the reasons accounting for changing administrators (Cembroski, 1997; Hart, 1985; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984; Stelck, 1997) are death, retirement, forced removal through demotion or firing, voluntary resignation, promotion, transfer, or advancement. The cause of principal succession predisposes assumptions held by a school's personnel and its communities regarding the incoming leader. The successor confronts different presumptions depending on the reason for the vacancy, for example: "Death appears to result in discontinuity because the transfer of the predecessor's knowledge to the successor is absent," whereas "promotion... is often viewed as a sign that the organization has judged the predecessor's policies and behaviors as successful, tending to result in successor reluctance to make too many changes" (Hart, 1985, p. 3). Macmillan (1993) suggests that school systems often use principal transfers to develop the skills of their in-school administrators (training ground) and to rejuvenate those principals who may have become complacent in their leadership. Principal rotation, another cause of succession and commonly practised in many school districts, is based on the belief that variety in setting expands the breath of experiences of a principal thereby increasing output (Noonan & Goldman, 1995). The literature confirms that the reason for succession influences the anticipatory behavior of participants in viewing the successor and determining their expectations of the successor.

Selection process. A number of researchers (e.g., Cembroski, 1997; Hart, 1985; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984; Stelck, 1997) identify the nature of the selection process as an influencing factor in shaping impressions of the successor. Hart (1985) explains that, because principal selection is done typically by superintendents and other top level administrators, "the perception of expertise of the sponsor, the stringency of selection requirements, and the size and depth of the candidate pool all affect the perceptions of

organizational members about the new leader" (p. 4). Succession selection seldom involves subordinates. The perceived competence of the selection advocate and the selection process are elements contributing to the eventual impact of successors on their groups and organizations because "newly designated leaders do not function totally independently of their benefactors" (Gordon & Rosen, 1981, cited in Miskel &Cosgrove, 1984, p. 8). The perceived expertise of new leaders based on the esteem attributed to their sponsors and selection agents bring important variables into leader succession dynamics.

Reputation of leaders. Follower acceptance is awarded more readily if competence has been exhibited in other positions or other settings. Information shared through informal networks precede entry into a position: "Preconceived notions of expertise, leadership style, maleablility, social congruence, and other factors are held by superordinates, subordinates, and relevant environmental groups" (Hart, 1985, p. 4). These notions lend credibility to what is referred to as sensemaking prior to succession (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985; Hart, 1985; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Ogawa & Smith, 1985) and can be both positive and negative. Restine (1997) states that, because "schools are enduring and complex institutions with multiple and ambiguous purposes that require highly developed repertoires of skills and knowledge in educational leaders" (p. 127), participants have set expectations of what skills, knowledge, and aptitudes a successor will bring to a school. Macmillan (1993) reports that previous experiences in administrative positions or consultant positions were seen as testimonials of the individuals' possession of required and desired skills. This sense of history and credibility contributes to perceptions.

Origin of leaders. In addition, origin of the new leader is an important prearrival factor (Hart, 1993; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992). Aspirant leaders chosen from within an organization, "insiders," already conversant with district culture and its socialization may be seen as possessing valuable knowledge about and a feel for the organization they will enter. Whereas leaders from "outsider" origins may lack important information in situations, they can provide "a healthy importation of new knowledge and

skills and become the catalyst for innovation within the organization" (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984, p. 9) and their detachment may result in higher level risk taking and change (Hart, 1985, p. 4). An outsider's past experiences and technical knowledge may or may not be seen as congruent with the new organization. The insider or outsider origin can have important positive or negative effects on how the new leader is perceived (Hart, 1993).

Frequency of successions. Frequency of successions appears to be highly related to the context in its contribution to prearrival factors (Hart, 1985; Hart, 1993). Ogawa and Smith (1985) noted that it is common practice in many school districts to rotate principals from school to school periodically. Hart (1985) explains a possible reason for this practice: "While long tenure may have a curvilinear relationship with effectiveness, increased effectiveness followed by decreased or levelling off performance, too frequent succession can be extremely disruptive to organizations" (p. 5). Macmillan (1993) cautions that the organizational members of some schools seen as training ground for new administrators respond to pending successors with a sense of complacency.

Prearrival sensemaking. Studies on prearrival sensemaking (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985; Hart, 1985; Ogawa & Smith, 1985) examined how teachers react when a succession is announced. They identified three types of responses: (a) detachment, (b) fear, and (c) high expectations. Because teachers are usually not involved directly in the selection of the successor, they tend to minimize the importance of the succession to the operation of the school: "It simply didn't matter" (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985, p. 22). Secondly, teachers feared how the incumbent might intrude on their current instructional practices: fear of the unknown and a loss of autonomy (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985, p. 22). Thirdly, the faculty held a set of expectations focused on the reputation, characteristics, and traits of the new principal. Fauske and Ogawa (1985) state that "the succession process seemed to reinforce the sense of distance between teachers and the principal" (p. 28).

Arrival Factors

The transition stage is the time when a new administrator formally enters the position. Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p. 4) list arrival factors impacting the succession process as (a) demography, (b) school structure and processes, (c) educational programs, (d) successor actions, (e) community, and (f) school effectiveness. They describe the complexity of social processes, personal traits of successors, and perceptions of members in an existent organization contribute to the arrival stage as the individual takes charge of the setting.

Demographic variables. In her self-reported research on leader succession, Hart (1985) described demographic variables as having considerable influence in her succession experience. She explains that the makeup of the organization and the personal characteristics of the new leader at entry as significant arrival factors.

> The age, sex, educational level. length of service, race, experience, maturity, and social congruence of the successor may all be important. Organizational size, the nature of the tasks, professional or job orientation of subordinates and superordinates, and environmental norms and practices all play a role in succession. Socioeconomic factors, student achievement levels, and school succession have also been related. (Hart, 1985, p. 5)

That these factors are influential is supported by other studies (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Brock & Grady, 1995; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995; Macmillan, 1993).

School structure, processes and educational programs. The existing school structure, school processes, and educational programs present a cadre into which the successor must "fit." Analyses of studies on leader succession (e.g., Gonzalez, 1997; Macmillan, 1993; Restine, 1997) report that the existing school and environmental norms influence an incumbent's success in a new position. They found that when the match is congruent between the successor and the organization, the dynamics of interaction are more comfortable and acceptance is more easily achieved. Macmillan (1993) states: "One of the reasons for her appointment was that her interest in the arts... matched the specialized focus of the school... staff members involved in the arts program were enthusiastic and excited about the possibilities for the following year" (p. 4).

Successor actions. Successor actions are the behaviors exhibited by the newly-appointed leader upon entry into the school setting. Research reveals that these immediate actions are contingent on how the successor perceives the role of the principalship, the past experiences of the successor, and administrative training (Gonzalez, 1997; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984). Because the successor has not had the opportunity to examine the interactions among a multiple set of norms, both internal and environmental, role clarification has yet to take place. Noonan and Goldman (1995) describe these actions: "New principals will attempt to set a tone, a vision when they first arrive. And while they may attempt to assert some degree of centralization to coordinate and control activities, they do this cautiously" (p. 6).

Community. Community is a considerable arrival factor for consideration in the succession process. Both the members of the school community and the larger environmental community hold preexisting beliefs, values, and standards which must be learned and respected by the incumbent. According to Fauske and Ogawa (1985, pp. 30-31) future research is required to uncover the range and sources of norms that affect the manner in which participants interpret events and live the dynamics of interactions at the arrival stage. Brock and Grady (1995) state that "each school has a unique population and corresponding needs..." (p. 38) and any changes brought about by a new principal must involve input from key stakeholders.

School effectiveness. A school perceived to be effective may influence the actions of a successor. Brock and Grady (1995) caution new principals to consider the school context prior to setting a course because: "Programs and procedures that are unfamiliar to you may be highly effective in the new school." In addition, Macmillan (1993) states that a successor must be cognizant of the valued and esteemed initiatives instituted by a predecessor and take care when challenging these.

Succession Effects

The postsuccession period is a time of stabilization. New relationships have been forged. There is comfort and a feeling for how to do this job. Mintzberg (1973, cited in Noonan & Goldman, 1995, p. 12) espoused that administration requires actions and these actions have effects. Succession effects, identified by Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p. 4) as changes in (a) reputations, (b) orientations, and (c) arrival factors resulting from the successor having practised for a period of time, are measures of differences brought about by a change in leader on a population and on the leader by the new environment (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992).

Positive, negative, and neutral effects. As reported in Hart and Bredeson (1996), various studies measuring the effects of leader succession on the behavior of individuals in an organization show mixed results. Positive effects occur when there is a good fit between the members of an existing organization and the new leader. Negative effects occur when the new leader disrupts the organization and people react negatively, thereby forcing the new leader to resort to hierarchical authority. Neutral effects occur when there is no appreciable difference in an organization with the introduction of a new leader, that leadership fills only a symbolic, attributional role.

In their study of changes in school climate during principal succession, Noonan and Goldman (1995) concluded that effects felt at the arrival stage dissipated with time: "Over time, both their window of opportunity will close and the staff will become acclimatized to their style" (p. 6). Hart (1993) supports this finding, noting that most successions result in small disruptions, followed by a return to the status quo, never dramatically altering the school. Warren (1989) refers to this as the "honeymoon" stage of succession.

Hart (1985) cautions that the conditions between succession and outcomes are difficult to define, contributing factors and casual relationships remaining unclear: "The effect of succession on organizations and organizations on successors may be casually

looped and researchers and observers should exercise care in assigning either credit or blame for organizational outcomes immediately following leadership succession" (p. 6). Fauske and Ogawa (1985, p. 1) warn: "Despite the ubiquity of principal succession and the belief that principal succession positively affects schools as well as principals, there is little research on the nature of those effects."

Socialization Processes

Traditional research on principal succession has concentrated heavily on the influences brought about by the newly appointed principal on a school (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985; Macmillan, 1993; Ogawa & Smith, 1985; Noonan & Goldman, 1995). The individual perspective, the view of the successor examined through case studies, has dominated the literature. Hart (1993) claims that although this standpoint acknowledges the importance placed on leadership roles in our culture, it leaves much unexplained and misrepresents the social nature of the organizations in which formal leaders work, omitting the social relationships developed between formal leaders and their hierarchical subordinates and superordinates (p. 9). Hart (1993) criticizes Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) framework as being too narrow and suggests that it must be expanded to examine the socialization processes among groups and individuals which occur during succession. She claims that in a context where "the mix of person and group is unique for each succession" (Hart, 1993, p. 8), commonly held personal and environmental beliefs and values influence and shape the process. Hart (1993) maintains that the areas of leader socialization, principal professional socialization, and organizational socialization (p. 6) shed additional insight into the succession process.

Leader socialization. Schools need principals who possess the qualities and skills required to affect achievement. Hart (1994) defines leader socialization as the "need to remain different and distinct so as to contribute creatively to the growth and development of the group" (p. 2). For this to occur, leaders need to understand their role and the context

in which they are exercising their practices. She describes this process as: "these conflicting requirements represent[ing] a classic tension between integration and creativity... destabilization events and the restabilization influence of socialization" (p. 2).

Principal professional socialization. Principal professional socialization refers to "those processes by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to adequately perform a social role, in this case the school principalship" (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992). Hart (1993) describes professional socialization as the internalization of the norms, values, and behaviors generally accepted as part of the professional role (p. 11). Principal professional socialization includes technical socialization, the knowledge, skills, and techniques needed to perform adequately as a school administrator; and moral socialization, the values, norms, and attitudes attendant to the career group (Hart, 1993, p. 19). This area is addressed through formal and informal training and development.

Organizational socialization. Hart (1994) defines organizational socialization as "the need to fit into the cohesive work group of the school" (p. 2) effected through the internalization of knowledge, values, and behaviors required in a particular role within a particular organization (Hart, 1993, p.11). It is "immediate, salient and pervasive -- often overpower[ing]s the effects of professional socialization" (p. 11). Studies (Buchner & Stelling, 1977; Duke, 1987; Guy, 1985, cited in Hart, 1993, p. 11; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992) reveal that the need to conform into the immediate work environment as prominent, giving organizational socialization precedence over professional socialization. Successful socialization validates authority and is termed "leadership" (Hart, 1993. p. 13).

Organizational socialization is also effected by the school community on the new leader. Hart (1993) quotes studies by Greenfield (1985) which reveal the dynamic influences of the individuals and groups of individuals which make up the school community on the new principal. She contends that, as a new leader influences the existing

school community, that community also exerts influence on the newly appointed principal and these interactions are crucial to understanding the reality of the succession process. Bogue (1985) supports this view by stating "technique must always be subservient to purpose" (p. 3). Hart and Bredeson (1996) state that "traditional research underrepresents the complexity of the social environment in which succession takes place" (p. 172). Anderson (1991) endorses this in his statement describing the principalship as a service of formally appointed leaders in established social organizations (p. 1).

Hart (1993) subdivides her review of literature on organizational socialization under four key themes: (a) tactics used in the socialization process, (b) socialization stages through which new members pass, (c) the personal and social contexts that shape the entire process, and (d) the outcomes or effects of socialization practices likely to result from these factors (p. 21).

Stages of Succession

Another useful blueprint for examining the literature on principal succession traces the process through three general stages faced by a formally appointed new leader in an organization: anticipation and confrontation, accommodation and integration; and stabilization as educational leadership and professional actualization (Hart, 1993; Hart & Bredeson, 1996). This perspective emphasizes the social interactions among players and categorizes succession events according to "periods of learning and uncertainty, gradual adjustment during which outcomes (custodial or organizational change) begin to emerge, and stabilization" (Hart, 1993, pp. 28-29, parenthesis in original). According to the research, these stages of socialization are cycles which are recurring, interdependent, and continuous. Leithwood, Steinbach, and Begley (1992) report on variations in the helpfulness of different socialization patterns experienced by beginning high school principals in Canada and found that helpful socialization contributed to consensus about norms and values at all levels of the organization.

Demographic Trends

Succession in school leadership, although ubiquitous, is an issue which is especially timely given current demographic trends. Ginty (1995) reports an estimated 60 percent of principals will reach retirement age by the year 2000 (Gonzalez, 1997, p. 2; Parkay & Currie, 1992, p. 71, cited in Ginty, pp. 34-35). Stelck (1997) says that: "a large percentage of experienced school administrators are approaching retirement age" and that this could potentially result in an influx of inexperienced school principals and assistant principals in turn leading to problems of lack of continuity and stability within the organizations. Cembrowski (1997, p. 1) raises the concern that fewer people are entering administration, especially in these times of increased competition, restructuring, the advent of the information age, and the complexities of doing business today. Ogawa and Smith (1985) describe the phenomenon as "a period of increased turnover in the ranks of the principalship (p. 1), while Gonzalez (1997) terms it the anticipation of "a substantial number of vacancies in principal positions" in the near future (p. 10). Leithwood, Steinbach, and Begley (1992) state that:

> It is possible that with the greatly increased demand for new school administrators over the next decade... socialization experiences may deteriorate. This is likely if typical, previous amounts of attention and effort given to socialization are spread across many more people (p. 303).

Literature on current conditions in Western Canada indicate that turnover rates for principals may increase. Montgomerie, Ward, and Peters (1991) make reference to "the greying of leadership" in education in the province of Alberta and express concern over a dearth of younger people involved in leadership positions in most schools and jurisdictions. "There is a serious danger that education in Alberta will be faced with a shortage of appropriate people for the many leadership positions which will inevitably become vacant in the next decade" (Montgomerie, Ward, & Peters, 1991, p. 45). The Alberta Teachers' Association (1993) quotes a study conducted by Oliva and Jesse indicating that within the next ten years, 62 percent of the school based administrators and

79 percent of the urban principals in Alberta will retire. A large urban jurisdiction in Northern Alberta estimates that within the next five years approximately one-quarter of its present administrators will need to be replaced.

School Effectiveness

Hart (1993) remarks that the principal is a key figure in school effectiveness (p. 7). Much of the literature on effective schools supports this view as is exemplified by Edmonds' (1979, p. 32: cited in Hart, 1993, p. 7) statement that "one of the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools is strong administrative leadership, without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together." Effective principals create the conditions necessary for the achievement of school goals. This perception of the principal as occupying a pivotal position in a school draws attention to the importance of leader succession and the importance of seeking ways to enhance the success of veteran and aspiring school leaders.

Succession Planning

Succession planning has been introduced in many jurisdictions to address the selection and integration of new formal leaders into their schools in order to assure the best possible outcomes. Rothwell (cited in Eastman, 1995, p. 1) defines succession planning as "any effort designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, or work group by making provision for the development and replacement of key people over time." Its purpose is to influence the continuity of an organization's leadership by identifying and developing aspiring and potential candidates for key administrative positions (Anderson, 1991; Ginty, 1995; Winning, 1996) and to identify its benefits and applications in various organizations (Eastman, 1995; Hart, 1993; Hart & Bredeson, 1996).

Although much has been written in the field of business regarding the succession planning, very little literature exists specifically on this topic in the area of education. Duke (foreword to Anderson, 1991, pp. vii-viii) states that there are substantial gaps in our

knowledge base about principals, an inability to define or predict the type of principal needed for a particular organizational situation, and a lack of agreement on what constitutes effective school leadership. "Succession development; training, recruiting, selection, induction, and evaluation of leaders; has not been systematically studied and does not appear to be well articulated in practice" (Greenfield, 1984, cited in Cembrowski, 1997, p. 7).

Duke (foreword to Anderson, 1991) comments on the substantial gaps in our knowledge base about principals: "We simply do not know enough about how to develop and sustain good leaders of schools." Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) suggest that "there are many roads to effectiveness as a principal. This is so because schools are highly ambiguous organizations, structurally very similar, yet peculiar according to variations in the social, racial, and economic characteristics of the containing community" (p. 268). The issues relating to succession and its influences on schools remain enigmatic.

Leithwood, Steinbach, and Begley (1992) describe the processes in the field of educational administration as ranging "from carefully planned, formal training programs, for example, through less formal but still planned experiences (e.g., working with a mentor) to quite informal, unplanned, on-the-job experiences" (p. 287). Cembrowski (1997) contends that succession planning, "a process that helps individuals to develop through mentorship, training, and enrichment in order to prepare them for future job advancements," (p. 35) requires the time "for developing the candidate" (p. 12) in order to address long-range organizational needs and to cultivate a supply of qualified talent to satisfy those needs. Cembrowski (1997) examined succession planning strategies available for career development in a postsecondary institute and found that the most effective forms identified by participants were: (a) job rotation, (b) formal training programs, (c) mentorship, (d) secondments, and (e) administrative internship programs. A closer examination and of succession planning processes in educational administration is required.

Formal Principal Training and Development Programs

An examination of the literature relating to the formal opportunities for professional development and training in the principalship (e.g., Cembrowski, 1997; Downey, 1987; Leithwood, 1988; Mappin, 1996; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Montgomerie, Ward, & Peters, 1991; Stelck, 1997; Thomson, 1993) confirms the wide range of programs available to students. These academic offerings represent various models of delivery, content, and approaches; ranging from a master's degree in educational administration offered through universities in the participant's immediate environment, university outreach programs, professional association academies, school jurisdictions initiatives, to seminars and workshops. Given the high registrations in these courses, many new and aspiring principals consider these sessions to be desirable and necessary. It is important to note that some jurisdictions in Western Canada provide specific principal leadership and training programs with university accreditation for aspiring administrators. In addition to the accredited training and development programs currently available, a number of informal initiatives to provide training and assistance to newly-appointed principals, veteran principals, and other leadership personnel. These informal opportunities, presented on a needs basis, usually center on technical training relating to emergent business processes, for example, the initiation of new computer software for tracking budgets. In addition, these inservice sessions provided team-building experiences and modelled approaches valued in the administrative field, such as shared problem-solving techniques, shared decision-making, and a time to examine practices.

Much criticism has been made, however, of the existing formal programs offered to potential principals. Anderson (1991) states that "principals' overriding complaint about university training programs is that they are 'too theoretical, and do not provide the necessary training to deal with the job'" (p. 5). This dissatisfaction is echoed in the writing of many researchers and is described as the "gap" between theory and practice (Forsyth, 1993, cited in Thomson, 1993, p. x; Ginty, 1995, p. 36; Hart, 1993, p. 8; Mappin, 1996;

Montgomerie, Ward, & Peters, 1991, p. 39; Thomson, 1990, p. 4). Another criticism described by Wright and Renihan (1985, p. 74) and Montgomerie, Ward, and Peters (1991, p. 19) is that formal programs are typically lacking in sequence, focus, and long term goals. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) report that "relative to the implications of our findings for the preparation and training of principals, we found little to suggest that university graduate training had much direct or observable influence on any of these men and women" (p. 256). Milstein and Krueger (1997) summarize the conclusions of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987, cited in Milstein & Krueger, 1997, p. 100) that "preparation programs were marked by 'lack of a definition of good educational leadership... lack of collaboration between school districts and universities... lack of systematic professional development for school administrators... [and] lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences'" (pp. vi-xvii).

Informal Principalship Training and Development

Bolman and Deal (1992) state that "learning from experience often plays a more powerful role than formal education" (p. 17). Informal training and development is considered a highly desirable asset. Its content is dependent on an individual's views of leaders "formed through their heritage, early experiences, formal training, and experience on the job" (Bolman & Deal, 1992, p. 17). Bogue (1985) summarizes this notion, "In fact, experience may be the most frequent mode of learning for administrators" (p. 22). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) contend that the informal learning that occurs as people enact their various roles is probably a major influence in shaping their capabilities as a principal. Informal training of potential principals, a practice effected at the school and district levels of organizations, was seen as being beneficial to newly appointed administrators. In support, Bogue (1985) states, "Each one who takes on administrative responsibility should discover that practice informs precept" (p. 2).

Bischoff (1990) found in his case study of principal behavior that "skill in human relations and potential for cultural leadership may be better predictors of principal success than the trainable skills of management techniques and the more instructional demands of instructional leadership" (p. 142).

Strategies to Enhance Succession

Hart (1993, p. 8) states that despite attempts to round out training programs, the concept of school administration remains ephemeral. She contends that: "Students and instructors alike recognize a gap between formal instruction in the practice of administration and the demands of practice." She adds that the demands cause new school leaders to abandon skills and knowledge acquired in preservice education and conform to existing patterns of practice. Her view is supported in other studies (e.g., Gonzalez, 1997; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Restine, 1997) which state that principals taking on their first assignment must find ways to connect and integrate their professional knowledge and experience.

Problems of practice. Restine (1997, p. 124) describes the academic offerings and strategies of traditional models for preparing educational leaders as typically proceeding from theory (abstraction) to practice (concrete experience). She counters that the most meaningful activities and experiences are those "built on problems of practice" because they then have validity and personal meaning. She adds: "Activity and experience in leadership preparation should be based on logic and should be rationally grounded in practice.... Theory and research findings become meaningful when illuminated through activity, experience, and practice." Restine (1997) states that:

> critiques of the design, content, context, delivery, and related principles of preparation programs strongly suggest that analyzing and working with problems of practice through experiential learning activities are more viable in developing skilled thinking and behavior than is knowledge, which is inert. Balance should shift between concrete experiences and thinking about, or interpreting, experiences and reflective deliberation using multiple sources of evidence and varied perspectives. (p. 127)

Milstein and Krueger (1997, p. 101) reviewed many of the leading higher education leadership preparation programs offered in the United States. They identified innovations brought to programs during the last decade to improve administrative preparation programs and concluded that a shift from the traditional preparation programs to include approaches that are more proactive, complex, and intensive had a major influence on the subsequent leadership practices of graduates in the long term. Results validated the importance of clinical experiences (e.g., mentors, learning in cohorts, reflective seminars, and internship experiences) as key elements necessary for effective administrator preparation. They add that "successful leadership programs are those that pay attention to the key program elements (p. 101)" and that these must be fostered if meaningful improvements are to be institutionalized. Their perspective is supported by Restine (1997) who states

> mentoring, partnerships, networks, and cohorts significantly advance collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge in efficacious ways, as opposed to the "rather individualized, isolated, and decontextualized processes" characteristic of too many educational settings. (p. 128)

Restine (1997) points out that it is critical that leadership preparation be linked to the purposes of schools. Her view is that "educational leaders' work is characterized by increasing complexity and uncertainty that is ill-suited to cause-effect solutions" (p. 119). Seldom do "technical solutions characterize the work of educational leaders" (Schön, 1983, cited in Restine, 1997, p. 119).

Other research indicates that effective preservice administrator training programs must be research-based, including a needs assessment of participants while taking into consideration the developmental aspects of the administrator's role and providing ample opportunities for candidates to participate, practice, and internalize their learning experiences. Stelck (1997, p. 8) states that it is critical to examine the effectiveness of programs aimed at identifying, selecting, and training potential school administrators: "Such examination should focus on both content and pedagogy..." in order to propose changes which would be perceived as valuable.

Field-based experience. According to Milstein and Krueger (1997), training programs in educational administration must emphasize the "leadership skills and the knowledge base" delivered in ways that model better approaches to instruction in schools (p. 104). In essence, these innovations break out of the traditional three-hour seminar conducted once per week and model adult learning approaches such as decision-making, conflict resolution, school improvement, problem-based learning, learner-identified projects, and interactive learning (pp. 104-113). Field-based experience (e.g., formalized and structured internships with an integrated classroom discussion component; learning modules with accompanying seminars; increasing use of simulations, case studies, role playing, and reflective writing; creating principal portfolios; teaming leading practitioners with professors to promote the blending of theory and experience; long-term field-based projects; workshops designed and presented by students; curriculum content organized around current educational topics; and organizing topics to parallel the cycle of activities being focused on in school districts) would enhance preparation programs making them current, relevant, and vibrant by providing integrated opportunities of gaining knowledge, skills, attributes, and practice required to move into educational administration positions.

Other mechanisms. In order to ease the process, a number of other meritous strategies have been suggested. Hart and Bredeson (1996) support reflective practice and visualization as methods of capitalizing from experience. Brown and Irby (1997) describe the benefits of creating a principal portfolio to gather and collect meaningful learning. Daresh and Playko (1993) propose mentorship as a means for support and connectedness. Mappin (1996) describes the effects of introducing simulations as a component of linking theory and practice. Warren (1989) promotes the establishment of a peer network to relieve the personal and professional isolation reported by first-year principals. Milstein and Krueger (1997) describe how learning in cohorts increases academic performance of group members by "allow[ing] for accelerated learning, more productive dialogues, enhanced opportunities to learn from the expertise of others, and closer relationships..." (pp. 105-

106). Milstein and Krueger (1997) articulate the value of internships "to prepare novices to cope with the core technical operations and responsibilities that will be encountered when they move into practitioner positions" (p. 107). These above-mentioned strategies address both professional and organizational socialization, indicating that more focus must be placed on the true circumstances of succession.

Krueger and Milstein (1995, cited in Milstein & Krueger, 1997) indicate "hands-on intern experiences in administrative responsibilities, mentors as supporters and models, and time for reflection in seminars are three elements most often cited as critical in developing a background of knowledge and skills to succeed as school leaders" (p. 109). Graduates of administrative preparation programs ranked internship as a the most highly valued program experience because its results were powerful, influential, and long term.

It is recognized that not all contingencies of principal succession can be taught or predicted (Bischoff, 1990). Traditional studies examine the technical socialization required in the principalship and identify components to consider. Hart's (1993) work presents the area of socialization as it impacts succession and, therefore, broadens the understanding of the dynamics among the individuals and groups of individuals existing in a school. She contends that succession is a complex interrelated socialization process which must be understood to achieve effective leader transition, an area requiring much more attention in the preparation of aspirant leaders.

Challenges for Beginning Principals

Beginning principals contribute considerably to the schools they enter. They bring with them relevant skills gained throughout their teaching careers (Baker, 1991) and demonstrate a willingness to gain additional knowledge and skills by furthering their careers in educational administration (Cembrowski, 1997; Stelck, 1997). They are potential reformers and rejuvenators bringing energy and enthusiasm, open views about schooling, a willingness to try new ideas, and recent engagement with theory and current

research about teaching and learning (Martinez, 1993). They possess strength in leadership and skills in human relations, essential for the development of educational excellence (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990).

"Learning the Ropes"

By far the greater part of the literature on administrative succession deals with the accession of rookie principals into their formal positions. This literature (e.g., Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Brock & Grady, 1995; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995; Hicks, 1996; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Thorpe, 1995; Warren, 1989) is often presented in the form of narratives, personal anecdotes, and autobiographies which are engaging, often funny, and revealing in their recurring themes. The reader is left with the impression of life as a new principal as an intense period of "learning the ropes." Embedded in these real life experiences can be found emerging patterns of dealing with the personal and professional pressures introduced during succession. In essence, these stories are about establishing oneself in the norms and values of an existing organization and gaining legitimacy as a principal. These stories all deal with socialization which is a complex, powerful process rather than technicity which can be learned. Therefore, this literature supports Hart's (1993) perspective that effective succession needs to look at both how the succession principal impacts the environment and how the community impacts on the principal.

Many authors agree that principals play a critical role in affecting the success of a school (e.g., Gonzalez, 1997; Hart, 1993; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Restine 1997; and Stelck, 1997). They hold the view that the position of principal is considered essential to the success and effectiveness of a school. Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) state: "To put it succinctly, the principal is accountable for the entire operation of the school" (p. 4). Baker (1991) points out that it is the principal who is responsible for maintaining and controlling "the ebb and flow of the constantly changing patterns of interaction that are part of the daily

life of the school." Gonzalez (1997) asks, if the principalship is so important, why has so little research been conducted on beginning school administrators.

Gonzalez (1997, p. 2) describes these first years of the principalship as a time filled with frustration and anxiety. She remarks that the novice principal must face a stream of problems all at once, what she refers to as "lack of training create[ing] chaos in the school" (Gonzalez, 1997, p. 1) and what Barth (foreword to Parkay & Hall, 1992, p. vii) refers to as "a time of trial and torment -- with an astronomical learning curve." Daresh (1986, cited in Warren, 1989, pp. 28-30) describes that beginning principals reported feelings of "being swamped" attributed to issues regarding role clarification, technical expertise, and socialization on personal and professional levels.

Induction

Anderson (1991, pp. 49-73) describes the first year of the principalship as an induction into the profession. He speaks of the "shock of entry" common among rookie administrators who are often left on their own to provide excellent leadership to schools. He identifies areas of "surprises, frustrations, needs, and problems" that new principals face as isolation, time management, technical problems, socialization to the school system, lack of feedback, and other needs. He summarizes: "The beginning principals in my study reported that they needed more assistance and information for working with and leading adults than for working with students" (p. 57). Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) describe this entry as coming to grips with setting leadership priorities.

Gonzalez (1997) studied the problems faced by beginning principals in Dade County, Florida and found that many new principals felt unprepared to address the many facets of their job. According to Leak, McKay, Splaine, Walker, and Heid (Leak, McKay, Splaine, Walker, & Heid, 1990, cited in Gonzalez, 1997, pp. 19-20) principal competencies fall into two categories: educational leadership and educational management.

> Competencies for educational leadership included problem analysis, decision-making, planning and goal-setting, conflict management, communication, and coordination. Competencies required for educational management comprised interpersonal and human relations, instructional supervision, coordination, stress management, staff development, planning and goal setting, problem analysis, and decision-making. (Gonzalez, 1997, pp. 19-20)

She contends that principals cannot be both excellent leaders and managers simultaneously, however, both roles coexist simultaneously in the same position. She speaks of inherent conflict in the role, function, and expectations of the principalship as a salient problem for beginning principals. Bischoff (1990) calls this the role hierarchy, suggesting that aspiring principals need to understand the importance of various tasks in relation to others in the demands of the principalship. This stance is supported by others (Daresh & Playko, 1993; Macmillan, 1993).

Moving into an administrative position is exciting, exhilarating, and frightening (Brock & Grady, 1995, pp. x-xi). The authors, speaking of veteran and beginning principal succession, identify three errors made frequently by succeeding principals: (a) underestimating the effect that change will have on the school and its communities, (b) underestimating the time needed to adjust to change, and (c) underestimating the personal costs of being the succeeding principal. They maintain that a better understanding of the change process and the socialization aspects of succession would assist the transition of the new principal into a school.

Role Definition

Role definition and role ambiguity are challenges for beginning principals (Bischoff, 1990). Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) found in their study of newly-appointed assistant-principals that their shift into a higher level of the organization had interpersonal impact, organizational impact, and emotional impact. This was due to refashioned outlooks and relationships in the new environment:

> [T]hey had to alter long-held perspectives on schools, enter a new peer group, redefine relations with former colleagues, and establish working associations with a new group of subordinates [and superordinates], while taking on unfamiliar, multiple, rapidly paced, and sometimes highly emotional tasks. (p. 125)

The first year in a new position seems to be a series of events that serve to redefine individuals in terms of their role and personal adjustments. Macmillan's (1993) study revealed that the new principal's conception of role at entry was markedly different from what the others in the organization understood to be the principal's role. According to Macmillan (1993), newly appointed principals often begin with notions of what they should do as principals, notions which they have to modify significantly. His respondents presented a natural tendency to do everything by themselves. In other words, their perceptions of where the boundaries of the role stood were axed on their conception of the principalship, and, as a consequence, had to be pushed to include the conceptions of the teachers in the setting.

Macmillan's (1993) study brought to light another concern faced by beginning principals. He found that new principals feel overwhelmed because the faculty viewed the principal as the main source of expertise for everything concerned with the school. He suggests that succeeding principals must demonstrate a realistic understanding of the functioning of schools and of the principals' responsibilities. Too many beginning principals want to do everything, please everyone. His participants, new to the educational administration felt their evaluation would receive heightened scrutiny, thereby having a higher stake in terms of their careers.

Macmillan (1993) contends that as individuals gain experience, they have a clearer concept of the constraints in the workplace.

> New principals seem to react like theorists who are suddenly confronted with the application of their theories, and find that their theories have only limited use in the everyday operation of schools. While new principals are willing to take risks in order to move towards their vision of the school, but which are based on their limited experience and understanding of schools and of the role of the principal, they find themselves having to learn what is actually possible to achieve, given the nature of their new understanding of schools. (p. 17)

Warren (1989) remarked that faculty allowed a "honeymoon" period to new administrators, a time when they were accepting of some of the errors which these novices make. In support, Gonzalez (1997, p. 12) quotes Webster: "It is permissible to say that you did not know something in the context of competence, but only for the first year. In addition, beginning principals need to remember that the same 'mistake' must never happen twice!" It is clear, however, that credibility as leaders rests upon the notion of soon learning which practices are acceptable and which are not.

Decision-Making

Work by Macmillan (1993), among others, has contributed to knowledge about differences in expert and novice practitioners' thinking and practice with respect to the way problems are framed and decisions are made. Restine (1997, p. 120) explains that "the discontinuity and variety of tasks and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, plus the pace of work, suggests that educational leaders must have a highly developed repertoire of thinking skills. The process of inquiry, how to ask questions and how to answer them, is at the core of preparation for educational leadership and administration." Restine (1997, p. 120) states "The centrality of teaching and learning in schools often is neglected in preparation and in practice."

Dual Socialization Processes

Hart (1993) states that for beginning principals, new to administration and new to a particular school, critical relationships and interaction patterns with others, their superiors, and the school social system are unestablished at the time of their appointment. These emerge during the succession process as a result of events. She describes this time "when the new administrator is deeply embroiled in a complex social process and when time to reflect on their experiences may be difficult to find (p. 8)" as a phenomenon of succession (Bischoff, 1990). Hart (1993) explains that two socialization experiences occur simultaneously for newly-appointed principals, fitting into a new social group (organizational socialization) and learning a new profession (principal professional

socialization) (p. 12). She suggests that principals' superiors need to assist the new principal facing these personal and professional pressures by providing them with socialization mechanisms. Another suggestion made by Hart and Bredeson (1996, pp. 147-172) is to provide beginning principals with a framework for organizing their actions, facilitating reflection, and understanding and capitalizing on the succession period in four areas: effects, context, personal factors, and stages.

Summary

Principal succession occurs when the formal leader in a school is replaced by another individual. This act brings with it changes in structure, social interactions, and performance. Therefore, it is not simply a single event but rather a number of socialization processes which are manifested dynamically over time. For beginning principals, socialization occurs on two levels, the professional level encompassing the technical and moral aspects of being a principal and the organizational level comprising the two-way interactions between the school communities and the principal.

Demographic trends indicate that within the next few years, there will be record numbers of rookie principals appointed to formal positions of leadership in schools. This review attempts to identify and understand the forces shaping the experiences of beginning principals during the succession process.

Although there is limited literature on the topic of succession in the field of educational administration, within this literature are studies based on various events, stages, and socialization processes common to the succession process. Studies on formal and informal preparation programs shed light on how beginning principals develop the knowledge and skills required for leading schools.

Literature on innovations and recent developments in principal preparation reported the benefits and shortfalls of these programs from the perspective of participants. Within these reports were found a number of alternative approaches, strategies, and recommendations to enhance aspirant principals' training and development programs.

Field-based initiatives were deemed to hold the greatest opportunity for linking theory and practice into real-life environments and settings. As well, studies reporting the challenges faced by beginning principals identified areas requiring specific attention to enable a smoother transition of the new leader into a complex existing organization.

Aspirant principals may find the Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) framework (see p. 7) for mapping out and charting their succession experiences beneficial. Understanding the process, being aware of and exposed to potential common problems, and developing a support network of peers may contribute by expanding on the opportunities for preparing new leaders for the workplace and identifying the tools necessary to ease their fit into the organizational setting on both the professional and personal levels.

With an invested knowledge of the succession process emerges confidence; an essential building block for successful succession into the principalship.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

The research method for this study was designed to explore the perceptions of preparedness of newly appointed principals for their succession experiences. The components discussed in this section include (a) type of study, (b) population and respondent group, (c) context of the district, (d) consent and confidentiality, (e) pilot study, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis, (h) researcher beliefs, (i) trustworthiness, (j) limitations, and (k) delimitations.

Type of Study

As this study dealt with perceptions, a naturalistic research design was used to access the depth of knowledge required by new principals. This descriptive and interpretive study focused on developing a body of knowledge in its natural context and from the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon using semi-structured interviews. Such interviews provided substance as they were allowed to be guided in part by the participants' responses. To obtain a preliminary assessment of the viability of the main study, a pilot study was conducted.

Population and Respondent Group

The target group for this research was newly-appointed principals. Volunteer first-year principals identified by Central Office personnel from a large urban school jurisdiction in Western Canada were invited to participate in this study. I purposefully selected the novice principals according to the level of their school assignment and gender. The respondent group constituted six volunteer novice principals representing two "preparation paths:" three participants had received no preservice training in the principalship and three participated in a leadership training and development course prior to assuming principalships.

Context of the District

The study was conducted in a large urban school jurisdiction comprising more than 150 schools serving approximately 60,000 students. In this district, site-based decision-making has been practiced for approximately 20 years. The culture of the organization places authority in the hands of individual principals; all carry the designation of senior staff. The vision in this district centers on student achievement.

Consent and Confidentiality

Respondents were requested to participate in the study by telephone. Oral and written descriptions of the research project outlining its (a) purpose and objectives, (b) theoretical significance and practical significance, (c) research method, (d) time and commitment for participation, (e) guaranteed confidentiality, and (f) the right to withdraw from the study at any time were provided prior to the interview. Opportunities were given to ask questions and obtain clarification of any aspect regarding the study. Participants were asked to sign a consent form outlining the purpose and methods of the study and agreeing to the interview (see Appendix A.) Permission to audiotape the interviews was given. Participants were provided with copies of transcripts of interviews on which they could identify data that they did not wish me to use. All names and places were assigned pseudonyms.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in the early part of 1998 to test the interview questions and to gather preliminary data for analysis. This provided me with the opportunity to refine the interview schedule and to develop a preliminary framework for recording and analyzing data in preparation for the "main" study.

The pilot study involved conducting a semi-structured interview with one novice principal who had received no preservice training in the principalship. This experience allowed me to alter the interview schedule design in terms of rephrasing questions and reorganizing the sequence of the questions. Also, the interview process helped test the

effectiveness of the questions and their validity in addressing the depth of information required of the respondents. This process alerted me to the importance of building rapport with the respondents and the messages given by nonverbal factors.

As well, the data analysis component of the pilot study permitted me to organize my findings by utilizing themes derived from the literature as a starting point, and consequently around themes emerging from the data. The information gleaned from the participant in the pilot study was incorporated into the main study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interviews. A review of relevant documents was also conducted to provide a context for what the principals who had participated in the preparation course had been exposed to. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principals at their school sites during the months of March and April 1998. The semi-structured approach provided a framework for gathering comparable information as well as permitting for deviation from the format when it appeared that the participants had relevant information to clarify and elaborate beyond the scope of the predetermined questions.

The construction of an interview guide (see Appendix B) took place over a number of months. Initially, the interview questions were developed and refined through a review of the literature, discussions with colleagues, and my own experiences as a principal. The interview guide was then further refined through an interview assignment and a pilot study. Opening questions addressed principal demographics and previous experiences in leadership. A second set of questions addressed technical learning and how this learning was acquired. A third group of questions addressed the socialization processes inherent to succession and the perceptions of preparedness the individuals felt they possessed to meet the challenge of succession.

Audiotape recordings were made during the interviews which ranged from 45 to 60 minutes in length. Verbatim transcripts (see Appendix C for an example of a partial transcript) of interviews were returned to the respondents for review, confirmation, and revision. Notes were taken during the interview to assist in clarifying ideas.

In conjunction with the semi-structured interviews, I extended data collection to include an examination of the contents of a binder supplied to all principalship training and development course participants. The binder contained general information (e.g., a course outline, focus topics, and a list of presenters) and specific documents related to each of the topics addressed in inservice sessions (e.g., district policies, research articles, and sample school plan).

Data Analysis

Data collected from the interviews were analyzed and coded into themes initially derived from the literature and subsequently emerging from the data. Using deductive and inductive techniques, as described by Berg (1998), thematic analysis of the data provided by the participants was conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the research process. Recurring themes, patterns of behaviours, and my beliefs provided the structure around which the data were organized and reported in this thesis.

Throughout the research process, I kept a journal to track my perceptions about the process, participants, and context. Emerging themes and insights into the research problem were documented.

Researcher Beliefs

I believed that principals who receive preservice training would express a greater preparedness for succession to the principalship than principals receiving no preservice training. Because structured training and development experiences provide individuals with awareness, opportunities to explore issues relevant to the principalship in a safe and secure environment, and a means for cultivating a support network of like-minded colleagues; trained novice principals possess a greater understanding of their role and will

be more satisfied with their performance. Also, the rhetoric associated with the program lends credibility to program participants as they have been recognized by superordinates for their potential suitability to fulfill the role of the principals. Given these beliefs, specific steps were taken in this study to mitigate their effects on the data collection and analyses processes. These steps are described in detail in the next section of this chapter.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Criteria for naturalistic research demand that assurances of the true value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality of the findings in the study be maintained. By focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), potential errors to trustworthiness were addressed.

The subject of the research problem, principal succession, is one in which the respondents may have wanted to be seen as successful. To ensure credibility, the interview schedule, developed and refined by consulting the literature, acquiring feedback from colleagues, and the pilot study, focused on gathering data centered on the participants' preparedness for the principalship, not the end product. During the interview process, care was taken in adhering to the interview guide, tape-recording the interviews, and transcribing the responses. Following the interviews, member checks were conducted by returning verbatim transcripts to the participants for verification, clarification, and elaboration. Throughout the research process, I kept a personal journal in which perceptions about the process, participants, and context were recorded. New ideas, insights, and emerging themes from each interview were documented. As well, assurances of confidentiality were given verbally and in writing to the respondents prior to and during the interview and may have alleviated the pressure that the respondents may have felt.

In conducting the research study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. An examination of documents broadened the perspectives provided by the information gathered.

Although generalizability was not an intent of this study, some of the findings may be useful for the training of aspirant and beginning principals in this jurisdiction and other educational institutions. To enhance transferablity, the descriptions of novice principals' succession experiences were "thick." Through careful selection of the principals, purposive sampling assured that the required range of data were gathered.

Dependability refers to the extent to which the findings in an inquiry can be replicated in a similar study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Steps taken to enhance the dependability of this study included (a) developing an acceptable interview schedule, (b) refining the interview questions in a pilot study, and (c) maintaining an audit trail. This "trail" consisted of all of the interview tapes, a master transcript of each interview, initial findings for each interview showing categories and themes, and journal notes.

Confirmability, the degree to which the findings are determined by the respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was assured through triangulation as described earlier, and through a constant search for underlying biases. As well, to ensure that my perceptions, choice of themes, and reporting of the findings were congruent with the data, a peer review of the data and the analysis was conducted. A colleague not associated with the study read the transcripts, the initial analysis of the findings, and confirmed the themes and categories to be consistent with the data.

Limitations

The intent of this study was not to produce generalizable results, rather I set out to understand the participants' experiences. Participants were purposefully selected volunteers chosen on the basis of their preservice training experiences in the principalship. Data collected from the participants and the patterns that emerged from their responses provided a rich description of six novice principals' succession experiences which may be transferable to preparedness of aspirant and novice principals in this jurisdiction and in other educational settings.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to participants selected from one school district. The intent was not an evaluation of a principalship preparation program, rather it sought to discern major contributors to leadership training and development for novice principal readiness. I chose to conduct this investigation utilizing the respondents' perceptions as the primary source of information to address the research problems and sub-problems.

Summary

This chapter described how this qualitative research, descriptive and interpretive in nature, was conducted. The research design is explained and a description of the respondent group is given. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and examined using thematic analysis. Recurring themes emerged which provided the structure around which the data were reported in the thesis. A pilot study was undertaken prior to the main study. Potential errors to trustworthiness were identified and strategies to maintain the integrity of the study were discussed. The findings, emerging from the data gathered from the respondents, are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings obtained from data collected in this study. The report commences with a brief outline of the research problem, sub-problems, and the method. The findings from the study are presented.

Research Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of preparedness of newly appointed principals who had not received specific leadership and development training in the principalship and newly appointed principals who had received formal training before entering the field. This was achieved by addressing the broad question: how do newly appointed principals with no formal training and with formal training view their preparedness for effecting their roles and responsibilities within an established social organization? Emerging within the purview of the general research problem were two sub-questions:

1. How prepared did new principals who do not participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship perceive themselves?

2. How prepared did new principals who participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship perceive themselves?

Method

This descriptive research focused on developing a body of knowledge in its natural context from the perspective of the participants. As this study dealt with perceptions, the depth of information required was accessed through the naturalistic method using semi-structured interviews. I also examined documentation on the principal training program available from the participants' employing school jurisdiction.

For the purpose of this study, two groups of newly-appointed principals were interviewed. Specifically, Group One principals had received no formal training in the principalship prior to entry whereas Group Two principals had received a preservice

principalship training and development course provided by their school district. To facilitate reading of the findings, the novice principals were clustered in the appropriate categories as shown in the chart below. Pseudonyms for Group One principals begin with the letter "A" and pseudonyms for Group Two principals begin with the letter "B."

Table 1

Composition of Sample

Group One - no preservice training

Name	Approximate Age	Years of Experience	Previous Positions
Anne	45 - 50	20 - 24	Curriculum Coordinator
Alice	45 - 50	25 – 29	Curricular Consultant
			Central Office Consultant
			Assistant Principal
Aaron	40 – 45	20 – 24	Acting For Principal

Group Two - preservice training

Name	Approximate Age	Years of Experience	Previous Positions
Betty	45 - 50	20 - 24	Curriculum Coordinator
			Assistant Principal
Bill	40 - 45	20 – 24	Curriculum Coordinator
			Assistant Principal
Bonnie	40 – 45	20 – 24	Curricular Consultant
			Curriculum Coordinator

The findings for the three participants constituting each group were pooled to serve as a composite description of the respondents' opinions of their preparedness for the principalship. Themes derived from the interviews were categorized using Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) model setting succession into three chronological phases classified as (a) prearrival factors, (b) arrival factors, and (c) succession effects. Recurring themes, patterns of behaviours, and my beliefs provided the structure around which the data were organized and reported.

Findings

Beginning Principals' Profile

The six newly-appointed principals in this study described similar backgrounds. According to the respondents, their selections for principalships followed an average of 22 years of experience in the field of education (see Table 1.) Four respondents reported that their experience had been limited to school settings, whereas, Alice and Bonnie had served in curricular and Central Office positions, providing them with preservice occasions to interact with Central Office senior staff. Bonnie was the only participant who had worked in more than one school jurisdiction.

All of the beginning principals had served in designated leadership positions prior to entering the principalship. This meant having occasions to work in other settings in various capacities (e.g., curricular consultant, curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, and "acting for" principal) where they obtained experience in effecting decisions, guiding others, and resolving issues. Anne and Bonnie reported being actively involved in a number of professional organizations, often in leadership roles. All participants stated that they had received positive feedback on their performance.

All of the respondents had pursued studies at the graduate level in educational leadership. Anne and Aaron had earned Masters of Education degrees in Curriculum and Educational Leadership. Betty and Bill were currently taking courses toward their Masters of Education degrees. Alice and Bonnie had completed some coursework at the magistral level, however they were not interested in obtaining a degree at this time. Anne and Bonnie stated that they had taken extensive inservicing in areas of interest throughout their careers. Betty, Bill, and Bonnie had successfully completed a Principalship Training and Development Course, a training program offered by this jurisdiction to aspirant principals.

These individuals were selected for principalships following diverse experiences as teachers and in leadership positions. All had served in designated leadership positions prior to being named principals, giving them a recent opportunity to perform duties related to educational administration and a perspective of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. All felt that their performance in previous leadership positions, involvement in community and professional organizations, individual strengths, and demonstrated competence in initiatives sponsored by the district served as criteria for their successions to the principalship.

Aspirations

Respondents gave mixed responses in relation to their aspirations toward the principalship. Anne, Betty, and Bill reported having actively pursued the principalship as the next step in their careers. They acknowledged having long standing personal desires to ascend to the position. In preparation, they invited multiple opportunities to serve in leadership capacities in their school settings, engaged in risk, and actively sought an appointment.

For Anne, Betty, and Bill, becoming a principal emanated as a personal goal early in their teaching careers. Betty's remark summed up their reasons for pursuing administration: "By the time I went to [school], I knew I wanted to do something different in the field of education." Anne added that she felt a need to be continually motivated: "I thought I must have a move here, something that would be a challenge for me." These participants felt that their knowledge and skills were congruent with the principalship.

In order to achieve their goal, they exhibited commitment, dedication, and loyalty to administrators and proved individual competence by "be[ing] good at what you do." They capitalized on opportunities presented: "Getting involved in leadership in small ways in the school" and "becoming a leader at your own school first." Bill described the benefits of such involvement as occasions "to try out a number of different strategies" and "an opportunity to use a system that was perhaps different from the one I would have

developed." Anne and Betty were given occasions to perform designate duties when their principals were out of the building. By working with exemplary administrators and accomplishing limited leadership tasks, they determined that the principalship would be an appropriate personal choice: "Having the experiences let me find out whether or not I liked it."

Anne, Betty, and Bill recalled that they had offered their candidacies for posted positions of leadership and had been unsuccessful. Bill said:

> I applied for numerous leadership positions... I was frequently short listed but was not selected as the final candidate. It was a leadership experience, tremendous growth. If I wasn't given feedback, I sought feedback because I found that that was very helpful to me.

In order to gain credentials and credibility, Betty and Bill decided to pursue studies toward a master's degree. Betty suggested two reasons why she had not been offered a principalship earlier:

> I think I may have been offered something earlier if I had been involved in a [master's] program and a few more district level initiatives and committees. I felt like you had to get known a little bit, beyond your own school.

On the other hand Alice, Aaron, and Bonnie stated that they had not actively sought principalships, rather they had been approached and offered principalships based on their performance and perceived abilities. They indicated that they would have been happy to continue teaching, Alice stated: "I love teaching, I would have stayed there." For these respondents, the principalship as a personal goal emerged as they became more involved in leadership activities.

Bonnie described her career path as "meandering" throughout her professional life, without deliberation. She stated that as opportunities for training and challenge presented themselves, she took advantage of them. She disclosed: "I think some things just happen. I think in some ways I put myself in positions where they can happen, so maybe subconsciously, there may be some kind of want there."

Alice and Bonnie discerned the principalship as a means of addressing personal learning needs. Alice stated:

> I know from my own personal experience, what works best for me is change. I am not one of those people who could stay in the same school doing the same job for twenty years and still be effective. I know that I need change.

Bonnie echoed this sense: "I just needed different experiences. I know that to stay interested I need to change." She also recognized that with change comes discomfort: "Maybe I need it, but I don't like it. I find it quite stressful."

Aaron gave a different perspective. He stated that he began to have aspirations toward administration when "I became a bit older" and became intrigued by changes in educational expectations. He added "I saw that I could make a different kind of difference for kids in their education" and "I can see that you can maintain that close interaction with the kids although it's not in a day-to-day classroom setting." Aaron recognized the principalship as a vehicle for effecting the greatest difference in the lives of children.

Anne, Betty, and Bill had consciously engaged in succession planning and had individualized the process to suit their personal needs. Alice, Aaron, and Bonnie had capitalized on leadership opportunities for more personal reasons: promoting personal learning, bringing forth innovations, and utilizing perceived personal skills.

Reputation, Advocacy, and Fit

As in all principal successions, whenever the key individual in an organization is replaced, the new leader is preceded by a number of prearrival factors disseminated through formal and informal networks. Reputation, advocacy, and fit played roles in the way these individuals were regarded by superordinates and subordinates.

Alice described her established reputation as a dedicated, competent, and responsible employee in the district as the major reason for her appointment. Aaron ascribed his performance in an "acting for" principal role and the advocacy of the principals with whom he had worked, especially the principal he replaced in a temporary capacity, as the major reasons for his selection:

> You've got to have a mentor [advocate] who is willing to share and willing to take a risk. You have to prove yourself worthy, to be professional always. You have to be willing to learn through errors. You have to be a lifelong learner.

Anne credited her appointment to past performance in the district, service in another field, and personal attributes. She felt that her experience in a different professional community was complementary, enhancing her readiness to enter her new assignment. Furthermore, she stated that personal attributes such as self-direction, strength of character, high level of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and dedication played a part in being recognized for the principalship: "I think there's a lot of natural things that happen too. You're moved into jobs that others think you're capable of handling."

Betty and Bill attributed their desire to become principals, willingness to learn, and competence in performing leadership duties as reasons why they were chosen to be involved in the jurisdiction's principalship training and development program and subsequently assigned a principalship. The program furnished exposure deemed critical by these two aspirant principals to become known to the district's senior staff in yet another way. Bill stated: "One of the big factors was the principal training course because you had the chance to interact frequently with people that made the decisions."

All respondents believed that their demonstrated personal strengths, their knowledge of district operation, and their success in previous leadership roles were perceived as desirable characteristics making them credible candidates for the principalship. Group Two participants added successful performance in the Course as a prearrival factor contributing to follower acceptance in their new school settings.

Sources of Training for the Principalship

Professional and organizational socialization processes are techniques utilized for learning about the principalship. Because the principalship is a multi-faceted discipline, the participants mentioned a wide range of methods deemed beneficial to obtaining pertinent training and development. Both groups reported that learning occurred throughout their working careers, much of the knowledge and many of the skills developed over time through personal and professional experiences. The respondents listed (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous assignments, (c) formal training, (d) support from Central Office personnel, (e) accessing contacts and networks, (f) learning from school communities, (g) learning from mistakes, (h) serving with professional organizations, and (i) university study as being the major contributors to their training for the principalship. Each is identified and described in this section.

Learning by doing. Anne, Alice, and Aaron were unanimous in expressing that the most prevalent and beneficial form of training resulted from being placed into a principalship and actually doing the job.

Group One respondents were candid in stating that much of their learning had been a consequence of "needing to know." They felt that learning on a needs basis was to be expected in any new position and that they were not concerned in these instances. Anne illustrated:

> The day after I was assigned, I ended up having to prepare an advertisement for an assistant principal here at the school. I didn't even know there was an assistant principal. It was like learning by fire. But I like that.

Aaron attributed his learning in the day-to-day running of the school and dealing with people as a result of a variety of experiences gained while working in his current position, what he called on-the-job training: "You have to learn those things by doing them. For myself, I can sit through inservice after inservice showing me exactly what I have to do, but until I get my own.... For me, I have to see it." He summed up his acquisition of skills as "my learning was a school of hard knocks." In reference to budgeting, Alice

learned while preparing the document for her particular school: "So coming here and having to do it for this school, that was the real learning experience. Doing it yourself." Group One participants explained that working through tasks while on-the-job provided them with the most useful training for the principalship.

Participants in Group Two agreed that learning by doing was a prevalent and beneficial form of training for the principalship. They saw the first year of the principalship as a rich training ground for learning the job as each school has a "unique rhythm" and is distinctive in its strengths and needs.

Betty described staff evaluation as an area which must be developed on-the-job, while working with the staff members in the school setting: "With the new information coming out from the government about critical self-appraisal, I think as true professionals we have to grow in that area." Further, she contended that a school plan is context bound: "Part of our learning plan is to do the best we can for the students in our school. Our school is a little different."

Bonnie credited her training and development in certain practices, for example, conflict resolution and budgeting, to learning by doing. She stated:

> This is a steep learning curve here. You can practise doing budgets and you can practise doing conflict resolution, but it's a whole different thing when you're dealing with real people and personalities. They're in front of you.

She described that the reality of practice served to fine tune and flesh out concepts.

Learning in previous assignments. These individuals entered their role position possessing a broad range of knowledge and skills developed through a variety of life experiences obtained while engaged in past assignments. Previous experiences appeared to be a major contributor to the dispositions of these newly-appointed principals.

All participants noted that training in effecting specific tasks had occurred during past service in leadership positions. Bonnie indicated: "The two things that helped me the most were working as a consultant and working as a curriculum coordinator." They attributed working alongside veteran administrators as they performed their various roles as

having provided them with the exposure, awareness, and level of understanding required to deal with similar situations in their own schools: "That experience helped me a lot in coming here." Gaining training through practical experiences in previous positions was key.

Alice expressed that knowledge was gained from her diverse career roles. She described her competencies as being learned informally.

> I believe that my training for the job was observing good principals when I was a teacher. I know I'm doing some things now that I know I learned from those principals. I am using skills I developed while I was working as a consultant. I learned ... about being able to tell the truth when dealing with people, being tactful, keeping confidences, and still giving the message.... I certainly learned a lot on-the-job training working as an assistant. I know that I need those experiences to do this job. I draw on those experiences.

Observing experienced principals and sitting in as they performed their roles gave her self-assurance in dealing with the individuals in her new school. She mentioned that these experiences also provided her with ideas on how to best approach change so that changes were seen as positive. Betty agreed stating that much of her knowledge was a result of "learning from the good administrators I worked with." She crediting training and development in administrative practices (e.g., budgeting) as a process she had been involved with for many years: "The principal gave me the opportunity to lead the parents and the staff through the process." Aaron credited his training and development in administrative practices, for example, budgeting, as learning by doing in past experiences by "being part of the team that did it at other schools."

Bonnie attributed thirst for new challenges (e.g., involvement in professional organizations, volunteering to sit on district and provincial committees, and being an "inservice groupie") as her initial training ground for leadership. She stated that her interest and engagement evolved over time but that she had "always been a leader."

Anne spoke of her experience as a curriculum coordinator as providing her with the background and confidence to deal with staff, parents, students, and agencies in her new setting. She remarked: "I learned a lot about staff and parents, very difficult parents, very difficult children, and a lot about institutions and agencies that are supposed to exist to support children."

All respondents described general knowledge regarding the principalship as being brought to the job, "skills that a person comes to the job possessing intuitively," and as lifelong skills developed over time through involvement in professional activities and community service.

Overall, previous experience was deemed a critical component of training and development for both bodies of novice principals. Group Two principals indicated that this type of learning had constituted the most important form of preparation for them.

Formal training. The participants constituting Group Two received formal training in the principalship provided by their jurisdiction. Involvement in this course was mentioned as being a prominent contributor to preparedness for their succession experiences.

The Principalship Training and Development Course was: "made up of 20 sessions, 16 Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and 4 Saturdays. Assignments every week. We would attend the session and the assignment would be due one week later." Bill described this course as a very worthwhile undertaking: "We delved into all areas of education that one can imagine. It was a broad range." Betty deemed the course content as valuable: "I felt the topics that we covered were absolutely excellent. I go to my binder still to look up information." The respondents commented that the course sometimes left them feeling in a state of "information overload."

Group Two principals declared that, through the program, they were exposed to numerous elements of the principalship and had opportunities to develop and practice related skills (e.g., budgeting processes, communication, reflective thought, and networking). Bonnie summed up the training provided to the participants in the Principalship Training and Development Course:

> Certainly the leadership course helped because, if it didn't provide you with the solutions, it let you know what the issues were going to be. It let you know that budget was coming up, that there would be conflict with different groups, how to work with your communities, how to approach change.

According to the respondents, the formal training served to confirm beliefs, provide specialized knowledge, and develop awareness regarding the responsibilities of the principalship. Some of the content was regarded by Betty as a review (e.g., decision-making processes): "We did cover that in the course... because it's good to go back and revisit. Sometimes you get in a rut and use the same method over and over again." Bill indicated that certain topics (e.g., staff evaluation and technological planning) constituted new learning and were covered extensively as few of the participants had had opportunity to execute these tasks in past assignments. In addition, all of the respondents indicated that the course setting provided a venue to establish a vibrant and cohesive network among participants, "a strong team."

Group One principals made no mention of formal training as a mechanism for learning about the principalship.

Support from Central Office personnel. Central Office personnel appeared to be another main source of training for these newly-appointed principals. Depending on the area of need, certain jurisdiction personnel were accessed to provide instruction, information, and discussion.

Budgeting was a concern for Anne. She admitted that she had to learn how to perform that element of the principalship quickly and has continued to learn about it. In order to gain knowledge and alleviate her discomfort, she obtained assistance from a district accountant and leadership consultants.

Alice described her need for support in the area of communication:

> I think I'm a good communicator verbally. I think I can express and articulate well. Writing it down is difficult and you get help from the right people so that you articulate it properly and make sure that you're not saying something that can come back at you afterwards.

Alice stated that her personal network provided her with strong links to the district as a whole: "Not just fellow principals. There was some sort of problem here and ... I called and had it sorted out in two seconds because of the personal connection I had." She found her personal network a valuable source of support especially in areas dealing with district matters (e.g., personnel issues,) however, she felt uncomfortable accessing other principals because she felt they were busy running their own schools.

In this district, a support group has been established for the sole purpose of providing ongoing assistance to first year principals. Newly-appointed principals meet monthly for sessions led by leadership consultants to address the issues, tasks, and responsibilities as they occur over the course of the school year. The beginning principals valued the learning gained through this support group, calling it an "excellent" opportunity to interact with other first year principals, to discuss different ways of approaching tasks, and to share practices. Alice explained the distinctive benefits of training provided through this group as timeliness, accessibility, and relevance of the assistance given.

> This course, when we're actually in the job, is probably the most beneficial because you're right there, it's happening right now and you've got these people, hands-on, to help you with it.

Aaron saw this venue as an opportunity to develop yet another support network to assist in dealing with administrative issues.

Group One respondents – those with no preservice training -- mentioned accessing Central Office personnel for assistance more often and more readily than participants in Group Two.

Accessing contacts and networks. Learning from colleagues, peers, contacts, and experts was a rich source of training utilized extensively by all of the participants. Obtaining information from others from within and without the jurisdiction served to enhance and verify practices.

The novice principals relied on former administrators, networks of principals, members of their principal support group, and colleagues to answer questions and assist them if they were uncertain of a procedure. Betty indicated:

> I certainly connect with my former administrators. They're all wonderful and they opened the door.... When I phone them, ... they are always ready to answer any questions for me. They'll go through it step by step if I need it.

Bill mentioned having a mentor assigned by the district to consult for assistance. Bonnie sought support from "people who had the same interests as I did" by "phoning each other and ask for help in specific situations." In meeting new challenges, Anne tackled tasks by calling on more experienced practitioners: "I thought the things that I'm aware of that I don't know, I will learn... I have numbers that I can call."

Given her school setting, Anne emphasized the importance of having a number of contacts from the community at large to draw upon for advice, assistance, and resources. Although some of the tasks required of a principal were new to her, she indicated that she has always found wonderful support: "I really found out a lot about the role of different agencies out there, so now, when I need help, I know who to call."

Aaron emphasized the importance of accessing colleagues in order to negate feelings of isolation: "You're never alone." As well, he found them a source of support and expertise: "There are people out there who will listen and give you very sound advice. Absolutely impeccable professionalism, impeccable integrity."

Learning from school communities. Gleaning information from staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders about the school's operation and organization also shaped the priorities focused upon by these new principals. This means provided the beginning principal with a "pulse" of the school and a framework from which to begin.

Bill illustrated the wisdom of heeding staff members who had experience within a particular school setting. He was concerned that the school enrolment was not reflecting the projection on which the school plan had been designed:

> I've expressed concern to some staff. They told me to relax as the kids will show up in September. I have to rely on some of these people as they have a greater sense of history of the school. I'm the one that's new.

Anne met with her staff informally before assuming the principalship. At that time, she asked the staff to provide her with information to structure her preparations for the job.

> I just asked two questions and they gave me so much information that I could work on all summer. The questions were: What were the highlights of your year, those things that made this school a great place and successful? and What are those things that you'd like to see change?

Their responses provided Anne with insights on what was important to staff, the priorities requiring focus, and "a feel" for what the people she worked with thought was important, resulting in determining a course of action for the year. She also contacted the members of her staff during the summer to hear about individual concerns. Those responses prompted Anne to make initial changes to the school facility, organization, and programming. Anne noted the importance of recognizing and respecting the capabilities and knowledge of the staff members she works with: "The staff trained me well."

Learning from mistakes. Alice and Anne mentioned the importance of continuing to be viewed as a learner. This role allowed the new principals to admit that they could make mistakes and could rethink decisions. This attitude extended invitations for input and assistance.

Alice claimed that "a lot of the decisions were made collaboratively" and "the staff were involved." She cautioned that, if necessary, decisions could be changed if circumstances altered or new information was provided. She stated that she had received feedback from her staff in support of her decision-making practices: "One of the comments was the buck stops with her and I think it has to when you're in this position. You can't leave people in limbo."

Serving with professional organizations. Another training ground identified by the respondents was service in professional organizations.

Anne described communication as a key element of the principalship. She attributed her strong communication skills to learning effected while serving with professional organizations. She listed a wide range of experiences (e.g., organizing educational conferences, presenting workshops, being chapter president of a professional organization, and establishing partnerships) which served to hone her interpersonal skills. In reference to decision making, Anne attributed her facility in effecting decisions as a skill gained while serving in different capacities on committees and as a member of different organizations.

University study. All of the participants had engaged in graduate study over the course of their careers. Some of the processes learned supplied some technical learning for effecting tasks attributed to the principalship.

Aaron and Betty credited university study for exposing them to meaningful processes which they utilized to work with staff:

> Projects and hands-on activities.... Those mean more to me than sitting down, reading a book, and writing a mid-term exam.... I work best by working with other folks towards a common goal. That type of activity works so much better for me because it sticks.

Strategies for Effecting Socialization

The beginning principals in this study referred to useful strategies which assisted in performing their roles and in shaping their practices. They identified (a) observation, (b) questioning, (c) informal meetings, (d) listening, (e) discussion, and (f) reflective thought as effective processes for gathering information about the principalship and for carrying out their role.

Observation. Both groups of respondents stated that observation was a powerful technique for learning about the principalship. Exposure to exemplary practices provided these novice principals with concrete situations for future application and reference.

The respondents attributed "learning from good administrators" as providing insights into processes that they now emulate. Bonnie described her personal learning style as observing others: "I am a watcher; I watch how other people deal with things." Betty commented: "I like to observe people's styles. I like to steal only the things that work for me." Bill credited his training and development in budgeting to observation of a former administrator:

> I probably learned more about budget and the things that affect my budgeting decisions now in terms of how I arrive at information through the experience of working with him. What I do on budget now is based on the work I did with him.

Alice ascribed learning disciplinary approaches to being an observer while experienced principals dealt with situations:

> what I learned from him was sitting in his office watching him work with the kids. And how he approached them, and how he talked to them, and what he said and did. I know I'm a zillion times better after watching him.

In decision-making, Alice attributed her ability to involve people in sound decision-making processes to the practices she observed as an assistant principal. "What I learned from the two of them was how to involve people, how to gather input, and make the decision." This training technique contributed to their orientation into the principalship.

Questioning. In order to work effectively in their new schools, these new principals solicited information by asking questions and obtaining different perspectives from within and without the school. The data indicated that two new principals began this process prior to entry, however the remaining four waited until they had entered the school setting to begin gathering details about the school and its communities.

Anne began the "taking charge" phase of her succession by asking questions: " I alerted them that I would be asking a lot of questions." She added: "I think what has been my saviour, many, many times, is asking questions. Picking up the phone and asking.... I allow myself the luxury of gathering information. It's made it a lot easier for me."

Informal meetings. One compelling and ubiquitous method of collecting data and becoming acquainted with stakeholders was the use of informal meetings. All respondents stated that informal face-to-face exchanges provided them with vital information for executing their roles. Anne called a meeting with her new staff in early June and asked staff members to identify effective current practices and to pinpoint areas requiring change. Bill introduced himself to his parent community by setting up an informal meeting with the school council:

> When I was able to come into the school on my own, I made telephone contact with the school council chair. I asked her to meet with me and to bring along any of the other parents that come out to meetings. I wanted to meet informally and chat with them about what was important about their school and where they would like to see their school going. I wanted to hear those things.

The respondents found that they were able to amass a great deal of knowledge about their particular schools by initiating dialogue during chance encounters. Betty reported gathering information about school demographics by "talking with the secretary, the former administrator, the assistant, staff associated with various social organizations and community agencies." Betty described her technique for getting to know the parents as cautious and informal because "the parents don't feel that they have the skills to offer. School has not been a good experience for our parents."

When asked how she met her student population, Bonnie was candid: "Interestingly, I get to know them through discipline issues. They get sent down here and we have a talk." She believed that getting to know the school and its communities is achieved "mainly on-the-job. It's not something you can do ahead of time."

Listening. Aaron described listening as his strategy for this "information-seeking year." He surveyed the students and has instituted weekly student roundtables to share concerns. He listened to his staff "to find out what works, what's been tried, and to develop a vision of where the school can go." He described getting to know parents: "With parents, it's just a matter of listening, asking relatively few questions, and doing a lot of listening."

Discussion. Every occasion to observe, question, and listen resulted in discussion among the stakeholders. With discussion came greater depth of knowledge for all of the respondents. They expressed the usefulness of delving into matters as a means of developing awareness and understanding of the values and beliefs held by different school communities.

Reflective thought. Reflective thought is a strategy used to enhance practice by reviewing one's method of dealing with a particular situation, deliberating alternatives, and drawing out key learnings. This strategy provided some of the participants with knowledge and confidence for dealing with similar situations. Betty stated that she used reflective thought as valued opportunities to identify strengths and concerns: "What are the good things we are doing? What do we need to change?" Alice described it as a practice effected on-the-job: "So that reflective thought for me is always built in." Bill termed it as an on-going practice which was crucial to lifelong learning. Reflective thought served to make connections between theoretical knowledge and the reality of practice.

Factors Influencing Succession

As in all successions, there are factors which influence the way a principal approaches and does the job. These are personal beliefs, personal style, personal traits, approach to change, predecessor's disposition, school demographics, respecting tradition, unresolved issues, and sense of self.

Personal beliefs. As a new principal must learn about the schools' communities, the individuals in place in a school setting must also learn about the values, beliefs, and ideals of the leader. Being earnest about "what matters" fostered respect for these newly-appointed administrators and provided rationale for certain actions and events. As their successions unfolded, a sense of connectedness developed among the stakeholders.

Anne explained to her staff that she saw her role as a facilitator to enhance the work of teachers and as an advocate for children in their learning and growth: "Teachers must have high expectations for kids. I'll deal with the barriers and they'll teach the kids." As a result, Anne found that her staff trusted her and respected her from the onset:

> They allowed me to deal with staffing issues.... They did not ask questions. They showed tremendous integrity.... That's the greatest honor that any staff can give to a principal, allowing me to do my job and trusting me to make the right choice.

Alice commented on the significance of sharing feelings:

> Let people know how you feel. At the very first staff meeting, I told staff that the most important things that went on in this building are what happens in their classrooms, day after day. Indirectly, I got a lot of positive feedback from that comment.

Aaron's personal philosophy regarding education was the driving force behind his practice: "This is the way it's got to be for our children... the need to do what's best for our children even if what we need to do may be out of our comfort zone."

Bill and Aaron stated that personal beliefs served to shape how certain professional tasks are broached. Aaron illustrated: "My own philosophy is that if a decision affects someone, I want to know what they have to say about it. Very basic. No magic."

Personal style. A new administrator's personal style affects the perceptions of stakeholders. All respondents described their personal style as being inviting, open, and professional, contributing to establishing positive relationships. Anne gave this example: "I was really open with the parents right away. They accepted me immediately for my style, who I am.... It was very reassuring for me early on that they were behind me."

Bonnie indicated that personal style caused initial discomfort as the pace of the principalship did not allow her to utlize her preferred decision-making process. She explained:

> I tend to be a ponderer. I don't like having to make fast decisions because I like to have a lot of information. I'm finding it easier as time goes on. I'm not as sensitive to making sure that all of the people's need are met. Sometimes, I have to make the decision. I'm getting better at deciding what are things I should just decide and what are things I need to bring to staff.

Personal traits. Personal traits and characteristics contributed to how these new principals exercised their roles. All respondents described themselves as able, dedicated, self-directed, self-confident, energetic, and enthusiastic individuals who enjoy challenges. These novice principals entered the job with personal strengths and well-honed communication, organizational, and decision-making skills. They expressed that these personal qualities were requirements for working effectively at this level of the organization. They added that, although these can be learned, they must be developed over time.

Anne stated that new principals need to rely on their common sense: "Make use of that good old common sense and do what is best for your particular situation." Bonnie mentioned that "being older makes it easier" as she felt very secure in who she is: "I don't try to be somebody else."

Approach to change. The respondents had opposing opinions on whether they should make initial changes upon entry. Although it had been strongly suggested that they approach the situation cautiously, the new principals had decidedly different views on what was appropriate in their settings.

Aaron and Bill employed a "wait and see" strategy. Aaron brought in virtually no changes upon his entry because he believed that a newly appointed principal must live with what was left in place by the former administrator: "You can't make a whole pile of changes right off the bat. You live with some things and think about what adjustments you might make at some point." Bill described his entry as: "I came in with the attitude that I would learn about the staff and the strengths of the school."

Betty called her approach a "blend of what was in place and what I brought with me." She described an open yet cautious approach to change. As student safety was an overriding concern in her setting, she initiated a greater emphasis on prosocial skills and supervision. Collaborative decisions were made to better serve children: "We need to do what's best for kids."

On the other hand, Alice and Anne reported making widespread changes to their schools upon entry. In essence, from the information they had gathered, they discerned ways of addressing issues which they put in place prior to and upon entry into their schools.

Predecessor's disposition. As in all successions, information about the school and its programs can be transmitted to the new leader by the predecessor. As well, the predecessor's disposition can play a role in how the new administrator is perceived and received by the stakeholders.

Anne and Betty reported being invited to come out to the school soon after their appointments to begin the transition process. Betty was asked to "come over because people at the school don't know who you are. I did not have a high profile in the district." This suited Betty's personal need for belonging: "I needed to belong for the summer and I needed to belong real fast." Betty was provided considerable information about the school by the former principal. In addition, she was given the opportunity to fill staff vacancies based on her own personal beliefs and expectations regarding teaching: "It's been a win-win."

Bill and Bonnie reported that their predecessors were somewhat more hesitant in inviting them out to the schools, subsequently limiting their prearrival preparation. Late entry prescribed the utilization of different techniques to learn about their new school settings. They used strategies such as spending time in the school during the summer, meeting informally with staff, reading school documents, and observation to collect information.

School demographics. As neighborhood demographics suggest the make up of a school's clientele, the respondents reported that information about the school community gave them a better understanding of "the world these children are living in." These facts; accessed through the district's budget manual, school profiles, contacts, observation, listening, and informal meetings; contributed to how each new administrator approached succession. Early interactions among the new principals and their communities were premeditated based on these data.

Anne and Betty felt that new principals should receive more comprehensive information regarding "the real community demographics" (e.g., community profile, school dynamics, teachers experiencing difficulties, potential problems and issues) during the preentry phase of succession. This would serve to provide awareness.

Before entering the school as its principal, Anne stated that she had personal experience in that particular community. Through her established network and contacts, she was able to obtain a demographic profile of the community and devise a plan for addressing areas of need. She invited community agencies and businesses to form mutually beneficial partnerships in aid of the children. She has put forth an initiative to open the school to community agencies during the summer months to "run programs that are needed: bicycle safety, child identification program." She wanted the school to be the "hub of the community," a safe place for children to learn and grow.

Bonnie's actual entry into the school did not occur until late summer, giving her little opportunity to gain background information. She stated that she learned about the demographics of her school "Just by being here." She added that her staff were helpful, "but it was a learn on the job situation."

Alice described her school setting as being unique in that over 200 of the 320 students were new to the school and new to the city: "So you've got two-thirds of your school who are brand new, have no affinity for your school whatsoever." This transiency resulted in a group of students who have been exposed to "a variety of experiences."

Being aware of the nature of the neighboring community, being cognizant of the characteristics of the student and parent populations, and being informed about upcoming events affecting the lives of the individuals were important considerations.

Respecting tradition. Aaron indicated that, in his particular school setting, tradition was viewed as playing a prominent role. Establishing relationships was made easier because he learned about and respected "the way things are done in this school." Consequently, he was cautious in his approach to succession:

> With coming into a school such as ours, tradition is a big thing. Dating back to [the opening of the school], there are some pictures that are hanging on the wall and will remain on the wall until they bring in the wrecking ball.

He stated: "So, you find out about all of these traditions that are in place in your school" and proceed from there.

Unresolved issues. Although all of the respondents reported feeling successful and comfortable in executing their new roles, they expressed a sense of discomfort regarding the ambiguity of the role of the principal in certain situations. All of the participants mentioned that, at times, they had felt "in the middle" during periods of tension between the teachers and the school board. They felt that clearer boundaries regarding the principal as an educational leader and the principal as a school administrator needed to be drawn and more direction was necessary to guide them address the inherent conflict in the role, function, and expectations of the principalship.

Sense of self. The succession of a principal affects the school environment. Equally important is the influence of the school environment on newly appointed principals. Participants gave mixed responses when asked if becoming a principal had changed them personally.

Anne, Betty, and Bonnie reported that becoming principals did not significantly change their own personal outlook and conduct. Anne stated that she experienced no change other than "I can wear a skirt or a dress." Betty replied that her disposition and performance remained constant: "Deep down, I still feel the same way about children, more

so than ever." Bonnie indicated that, although the principalship had not changed her personally, the way she dealt with issues changed simply because she understood how things work: "I am more decisive now than I was at the beginning. It's my school now."

However, Alice and Aaron divulged that they had discerned changes in how they behaved and saw their role in the professional community. Alice stated that the most salient change was in how she worked with people:

> It's probably made me more a politician. Now it's your job, not somebody else's to be dealing with the school council, dealing with the angry parents.... Now you're the ultimate authority. You're the one that people come to.

She explained that she was more conscious of taking more time with people. "taking the time to chat, even if I don't have the time." She saw this as a political move in a positive sense: "...being tactful, being a good listener, giving people their due." Aaron believed that his appointment to the principalship caused personal changes in how he perceived himself and this affected his performance.

> I think it was a realization about how I felt about education, how I felt about myself professionally. I think I live the job more.... I find that the definition of myself is changed. I'm more vocal than ever before, speaking out against what is preventing us from doing what is best for kids.

He described that he has become more firm in his efforts to identify and initiate changes for the benefit of kids, for example, a need for the curriculum to acknowledge the reality of combined grades. He stated that he is prepared to support his point of view when he sees an anomaly in the system: "I'll defend myself to anybody." Bill recognized that he had become him more compassionate and tolerant: "I may not be as quick because I understand some of the things the students have to deal with."

Summary

The findings arising from this study are categorized according to the headings (a) beginning principals' profile; (b) aspirations; (c) reputation, advocacy, and fit; (d) sources of training for the principalship (e) strategies for effecting socialization and (f) factors influencing succession. Within each heading are themes derived from the data.

New principals in this study possessed similar backgrounds. They had extensive experience in the field of education, had pursued studies at the graduate level, had occupied a designated leadership position, and had proven success. Anne, Betty, and Bill indicated that the principalship had been a long standing career goal, whereas Alice, Aaron, and Bonnie indicated that the principalship emerged as a career goal as they effected assignments in other positions. Prearrival factors of reputation, advocacy, and fit played an important part in their being assigned principalships and contributed to sensemaking of their appointments by various communities.

Respondents reported similar sources of training for the principalship. Group One identified their sources as (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous assignments, (c) support from Central Office personnel, (d) accessing contacts and networks, (e) learning from school communities, (f) learning from mistakes, (g) serving with professional organizations, and (h) university study. Group Two listed their sources as (a) learning in previous assignments, (b) formal training, (c) learning by doing, (d) learning from school communities, (e) accessing contacts and networks, and (f) university study. It appeared that the groups had different preferences for effecting leadership training and development.

The strategies deemed most beneficial to obtaining the necessary information to perform their particular roles and responsibilities were (a) observation, (b) questioning, (c) informal meetings, (d) listening, (e) discussion, and (f) reflective thought. All respondents indicated that they had utilized these processes to construct a personalized style of leadership, to develop action plans, and to guide their current practices.

Factors influencing succession emerged from the analysis. The study revealed the following elements of transition which were considered important to the novice principals: (a) personal beliefs, (b) personal style, (c) personal traits, (d) approach to change, (e) predecessor's disposition, (f) school demographics, (g) respecting traditions, (h) unresolved issues, and (i) sense of self.

Overall, the findings indicated that both groups of beginning principals felt well-prepared and ready for the principalship. Preservice training was seen as an asset, however it was not deemed crucial to success.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

According to the principal succession literature, the act or process of replacing the formal leader causes reverberations throughout organizations and their related communities by impacting on existing relationships, expectations, and outcomes (Brock & Grady, 1995, pp. x-xi; Hart, 1993, p. 5; Parkay & Hall, 1992), what Hart (1993) terms the most widespread type of organizational change. This study examined the perceptions of preparedness for succession of six first year principals. Group One constituted three novice principals who had received no formal preservice training in the principalship. Group Two constituted three beginning principals who had participated in a Principalship Training and Development Course provided by a large urban school jurisdiction in Western Canada prior to their appointment to the principalship.

As succession takes place over time, the similarities and differences among the respondents' experiences are discussed in the larger context using Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) model (adapted from Gordon & Rosen, 1981, cited in Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984) as a guide to situate findings in a chronological sequence. The findings are categorized and discussed under the headings (a) beginning principals' profile; (b) aspirations; (c) reputation, advocacy, and fit; (d) sources of training for the principalship (e) strategies for effecting socialization and (f) factors influencing succession.

Beginning Principals' Profile

The novice principals in this study described similar backgrounds. All had extensive experiences as educators, an average of 22 years of service in the field. All had served in designated leadership capacities prior to becoming principals; giving them opportunity to obtain informal training, presenting occasions to perform duties related to educational administration, and constructing their perspectives of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. This supports Macmillan's (1993) findings that

previous experiences in administrative positions or consultant positions are seen as trustworthy measures of credibility, contributing positively to follower acceptance. All felt that they had demonstrated competence and were perceived as successful in past endeavors.

All of the respondents had pursued studies at the graduate level in educational leadership. The findings revealed that this type of training was seen as beneficial to, however not necessarily congruent with, preparedness for the principalship. This sustains Anderson's (1991) statement that, although perceived as an asset these programs are often too theoretical and seldom provide know-how to deal with the emergent issues pervasive in the fray (p.5). Others (e.g., Forsyth, 1993, cited in Thomson, 1993, p.x; Ginty, 1995, p. 36; Hart, 1993, p. 8; Mappin, 1996; Montgomerie, Ward, & Peters, 1991, p. 39; Thomson, 1990, p. 4) echoed this view, calling it the "gap" between theory and practice.

Aspirations

Although not addressed in literature on principal succession, aspirations to the principalship was a prearrival factor examined in this study. Participants gave mixed responses regarding personal ambition. One respondent in Group One and two respondents in Group Two acknowledged that becoming a principal had been a long standing personal goal, a desire motivating their professional behaviors in school settings and their pursuit of leadership positions. The other three respondents did not actively seek principalships, rather they were approached and offered positions based on past performance, perceived personal abilities, and strong advocacy of former administrators. Therefore, three novice principals had engaged in succession planning initiatives (Anderson, 1991; Ginty, 1995; Rothwell, cited in Eastman, 1995, p. 1; Winning, 1996) in order to influence their selection and integration as new formal leaders.

All the newly-appointed principals stated that they recognized a wish to serve as educators in a "different" capacity: "I saw that I could make a different kind of difference for kids in their education" and "If I can be effective, here is the time to do it." This parallels Ogawa and Smith's (1985) view that "people generally believe good things

happen to schools and to principals when a change of principals is made" (p.1). With regard to their new positions, the novice principals felt that they would bring fresh visions and the means to "open members' minds to new possibilities" (Child & Keiser, 1981, cited in Hart, 1985, p.3)

Reputation, Advocacy, and Fit

Reputation, advocacy, and fit (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984) were deemed critical factors, contributing to presumptions of expertise and competence. According to Restine (1997), schools "require highly developed repertoires of skills and knowledge in educational leaders" (p.127). The respondents stated that they saw themselves as possessing valuable skills, knowledge, and aptitudes which had been recognized and respected by former administrators, colleagues, and senior staff, thereby, supporting their candidacy for the principalship. Anne summed up the disposition of the respondents: "You're moved into jobs that others think you're capable of handling." Further, all participants attributed the dissemination of information prior to entry via formal and informal networks as contributing to what is referred to as sensemaking prior to succession (Fauske & Ogawa, 1985; Hart, 1985; Macmillan, 1993; Ogawa & Smith, 1985; Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p. 4) list prearrival factors as: (a) the reason for a succession, (b) selection process, (c) reputations of leaders, and (d) orientations of leaders. For all of the respondents, the most significant prearrival factor dealt with perceptions of exemplary personal reputations coming from demonstrations of competence exhibited in other positions or other settings. To a lesser, yet important, extent the participants mentioned personal orientations; such as determination, commitment, and liking change; as being viewed positively by superordinates thereby influencing their appointments. For the participants with formal training, the selection process (Cembroski, 1997; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984; Stelck, 1997) was deemed an important element because, through formal training, they had "the chance to interact frequently with people that made the decisions."

Perhaps due to the size of this school jurisdiction where replacing principals is common practice, none of the participants was concerned with reason for the succession as impacting their entry into the position.

Sources of Training for the Principalship

The findings revealed that learning about the principalship had occurred throughout the respondents' working careers, much of the knowledge and many of the skills learned and developed over time in a variety of situations. Blumberg and Greenfield's (1980) suggestion that "there are many roads to effectiveness as a principal," is supported by the data. Newly-appointed principals in both groups believed that they were well-prepared and ready "to cope with the core technical operations and responsibilities" (Milstein & Krueger, 1997, p.107). They believed that they had acquired what Leithwood, Steinbach, and Begley (1992) termed "the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to adequately perform the school principalship" and what Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) called successful socialization. They attributed their preparedness to training and development received prior to, at, and following succession.

Although both groups of respondents gave similar responses regarding their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform the tasks inherent to the principalship; the mechanisms deemed most effective to principal preparedness were prioritized in decidedly different patterns for each group. Group One mentioned their sources of leadership training and development as (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous assignments, (c) support from Central Office personnel, (d) accessing contacts and networks, (e) learning from school communities, (f) learning from mistakes, (g) serving with professional organizations, and (h) university study. Group Two identified their sources of leadership training as (a) learning in previous assignments, (b) formal training, (c) learning by doing, (d) support from Central Office personnel, (e) learning from school communities, (f) accessing contacts and networks, and (g) university study. The findings for each of these sources are presented and discussed in the following section.

Learning by doing. Group One identified learning by doing as the primary source of training for executing the roles and responsibilities of an educational administrator, while on-the-job. These respondents termed this "learn by fire," "a school of hard knocks," and "doing it." Learning on a needs basis was regarded as effective, timely, and challenging. Group One concurred with Blumberg and Greenfield's (1980) observation that the informal learning that occurs as people enact their various roles is probably a major influence in shaping their capabilities as a principal. Group One principals also agreed with Bogue's (1985) statement: "Each one who takes on administrative responsibility should discover that practice informs precept" (p.2). Group One respondents appeared to prefer learning while in the job, identifying saliency of training as being crucial to learning:

> It's probably better at the time than prior to the job. Prior to being in the position, a lot of this stuff doesn't have enough meaning. It's when you're in the position that it's very immediate, very real, very concrete. Like you're in it now. And so that's why I think the support they're giving us right now, I would say it's the most valuable thing I've had this year. But I don't think doing these things a year ago would have had the same impact at all.

Learning in previous assignments. Group Two indicated learning in previous assignments was the most beneficial mechanism for training. Performing certain duties and observing exemplary role models supplied background and skills viewed useful in broaching the principalship. Initial training was a result of "learning from good administrators I worked with." It would appear that these respondents agree with Bolman and Deal (1992) who state that learning from experience is considered a highly desirable asset as it defines an individual's views of leaders "formed through their heritage, early experiences, formal training, and experience on the job" (p. 17). They attributed that working with others as they performed their various roles had provided knowledge that was transferable when dealing with similar situations in their own schools: "That experience helped me a lot in coming here." Group One participants agreed with Group Two regarding past experience and its utility in preparedness, stating that it had provided them with wealth of information to draw upon when they entered their own schools. The

respondents agreed with Bogue (1985) who stated: "In fact, experience may be the most frequent mode of learning for administrators" (p. 22) and Milstein and Krueger (1997) who described "hands-on" experiences as critical in developing a background of knowledge and skills to succeed as school leaders" (p.109).

Formal training. As expected, formal training constituted the main difference between the two sets of principals. Group Two viewed it as an excellent leadership training and development vehicle, providing exposure to and experience with a broad range of elements of the principalship. They found the course provided knowledge and skills, awareness, and opportunities to interact with colleagues and senior staff.

> Certainly the leadership course helped because, if it didn't provide you with the solutions, it let you know what the issues were going to be. It let you know that budget was coming up, that there would be conflict with different groups, how to work with your communities, how to approach budget.

Formal training enhanced the level of confidence felt by these new principals. In addition, it provided Betty and Bill with an opportunity to become known to senior Central Office staff, "the ones who make decisions." The participants with formal training agreed with Hart (1993) and others (e.g., Gonzalez, 1997; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Restine, 1997) recognizing that, as principals taking on their first assignments, they would find ways to connect and integrate their professional knowledge and experience. Group Two principals shared that they had developed an additional network made up of leadership course participants, many of these individuals also serving in first year principalships, who formed a cohesive bond during the period of training and continued to be accessible and supportive. Group Two principals, then, had developed yet another constant source of support through formal training for their first year experience.

No mention of formal training was made by Group One participants, indicating that the topics covered could be learned informally through other means, on a "needs" basis, and in one-on-one training situations. Group One appeared to be generally more supportive of Bolman and Deal (1992) who state that "learning from experience often plays a more powerful role than formal education" (p. 17).

Support from Central Office personnel. Both groups of principals sought aid from Central Office personnel. Restine (1997, p. 128) supports the effectiveness of such interactions as significantly advancing collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge in efficacious ways. The novice principals saw this vehicle as a way to learn what they did not know, what they were not aware of, or to obtain guidance and advice.

Beginning principals from both groups identified the new principals support group as an important, timely, and relevant source of training and development. One new principal with no formal training deemed it the most critical factor for success: "This course, when we're actually in the job, is probably the most beneficial because you're right there, it's happening right now and you've got these people, hands-on, to help you with it." This type of structured professional development for providing ongoing training was not reported in the literature pertaining to novice principal succession. This finding opens an unexplored avenue for providing continuing learning opportunities for first-year principals.

Accessing contacts and networks. In reference to contacts and networks, both bodies of principals reported accessing valued colleagues and support groups, stating that these networks had been established through previous experiences and during their first year in the principalship. They agreed with Restine (1997) who states that partnerships, networks, and mentorships significantly enhance the construction of knowledge (p.128) because leadership training must be linked to the purposes of schools.

Mentors were mentioned as a key resource by participants in both groups. Data revealed multiple occasions when teaming with more experienced practitioners provided support for novice principals. However, these relationships were far looser, less intense, and less consistent, than what is generally accepted in the literature as mentorship. Daresh and Playko's (1993) definition of mentorship proposes an intense professionally centered relationship in which the more experienced practitioner guides, advises, and assists the

novice providing support and connectedness over a sustained period. This was not evident in the data. Although these beginning principals had been paired with exemplary experienced practitioners for contact and consultation, the findings do not support these loose couplings as true mentorships.

Learning from school communities. Participants in both groups indicated that they had been imparted information which shaped their practice from various school community members. This finding endorses Macmillan's (1993) notion that the principalship must include the "conceptions" of the students, parents, and teachers in the setting.

All of the participants viewed the skills required to become acquainted with school communities and to form effective working relationships as "people skills," strategies and techniques conducive to initiating interactions, building connections, and developing a sense of team among the stakeholders. All expressed that these were prerequisite abilities brought to the job, learned informally, and developed throughout their personal and professional lives. This finding echoes Bischoff's (1990) premise that required principal behavior is "skill in human relations and potential for cultural leadership" (p. 142).

In addition, Group One and Group Two participants reported approaching their communities to gather information about preexisting beliefs, values, and standards as a critical step in establishing comfortable relationships. They emphasized a need to learn much more about and a necessity to respect the forces already in place in the school settings during the prearrival and arrival stages of succession. According to Fauske and Ogawa (1985, pp. 30-31), there is a need to uncover the range and sources of norms that affect the manner in which participants interpret events and live the dynamics of interactions. In effecting the processes, the participants expressed a need for intuitiveness regarding contexts where "the mix of person and group is unique for each succession" (Hart, 1993, p. 8).

Learning from mistakes. Respondents in Group One stressed the value of learning from mistakes and being open to reviewing decisions which had been made in error. They expressed the importance of being perceived as a learner by stakeholders. This form of learning is described in literature (e.g., Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Brock & Grady, 1995; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995; Hicks, 1996; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Thorpe, 1995; Warren, 1989) as an intense period of "learning the ropes."

Serving with professional organizations. Two respondents, one from each group, prized previous learning effected while serving with professional groups, associations, and committees. Through this mechanism, Anne and Bonnie had obtained skills (e.g., communication skills and decision-making skills) which they transferred to their current positions. The literature does not address this issue explicitly.

University study. University study was mentioned as a training ground by one participant in each group. Aaron and Betty attributed learning about some aspects of the principalship through various projects and topics covered while doing graduate study. Upon closer examination of the findings, university study appeared to provide these novice principals with opportunities with what Restine (1997) calls "theory and research findings become[ing] meaningful when illuminated through activity, experience, and practice" (p.128).

Strategies for Effecting Socialization

Participants in both groups mentioned the importance of using interactive strategies to gain information. They identified observation, questioning, informal meetings, listening, discussion, and reflective thought as powerful and productive techniques for developing awareness and understanding. This concurs with Restine's (1997, p.124) description of meaningful activities and experiences as being those "built on problems of practice" because they then have validity and personal meaning. Further, the data support Restine's (1997) conclusion that educational leaders must have a highly developed

repertoire of thinking skills as "the process of inquiry, how to ask questions and how to answer them, is at the core of preparation for educational leadership and administration" (p. 127).

When questioned about dealing with individuals inherent to the school setting, the respondents gave mixed responses as to when organizational socialization had been effected. Anne and Betty reported extensive opportunities to become acquainted with the school communities prior to entering the school setting. For the majority, however, this socialization described by Hart (1993) as part of the "take charge" phase of succession and categorized by Miskel and Cosgrove (1984, p.4) as an arrival factor occurred upon entry as the new principal became actively involved with the individuals at the school.

Factors Influencing Succession

Personal beliefs, style, and traits. Personal attributes of successors contributed to the perceptions of members in the existent organization during the arrival stage of succession (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984, p. 4). Data supported Hart and Bredeson's (1996) notion that the beginning principal's beliefs, style, and personality traits contribute to successor actions during the "taking charge" phase and provide rationale for successor practices and decisions. Therefore, the new leader must "fit" if succession effects are to be positive (Hart & Bredeson, 1996).

The respondents viewed themselves as potential reformers and rejuvenators bringing conviction, energy, enthusiasm, open views about schooling, and willingness to try new ideas (Martinez, 1993). The data echoed Kimbrough and Burkett's (1990) conclusion that strength strength in leadership and skills in human relations are essential for the development of educational excellence.

Approach to change. Successor actions are the behaviors exhibited by the newly-appointed leader upon entry into the school setting. Research reveals that these immediate actions are contingent on how the successor perceives the role of the principalship, the past experiences of the successor, and administrative training (Gonzalez,

1997; Miskel and Cosgrove, 1984). The respondents had mixed views on whether they should make initial changes upon entry. Aaron, Bill, and Bonnie made virtually no changes upon entry. Betty described her approach as a blend of what was in place and what she brought with her to the position. Anne and Alice made widespread changes prior to and upon entry. Group One principals appeared to make decisions more readily and with greater conviction, indicating that they were very comfortable with effecting change.

Predecessor's disposition. An interesting finding evident in both groups centered on the role the predecessor has in succession. According to Miskel and Cosgrove (1984), the reason for a change in leader is an important contributing element forming the perceptions of the existent school communities in which succession occurs. According to the respondents, the disposition of the predecessor in welcoming and assisting the novice principal was seen as impactful, resulting in disparate levels of knowledge about the school settings and dissimilar succession principal behaviors upon entry. This is a new contribution not found in the literature.

School demographics. The respondents reported that a comprehensive school profile had been overlooked as crucial knowledge, necessary to shape early interactions among the new principal and the individuals in the school setting. They expressed that, as new principals, information regarding the school setting (e.g., teachers experiencing difficulties, community demographics, and information about potential problems and issues) would have provided greater awareness and understanding of "the world these children are living in," consequently contributing to their successor actions prior to and upon entry. This finding is supported in many studies (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Brock & Grady, 1995; Hart, 1985; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995; Macmillan, 1993) which state that demographic variables have considerable influence in approach to succession, initiation of tasks, professional or job orientation of subordinates and superordinates, and environmental norms and practices."

Unresolved issues. All participants mentioned underlying discomfort stemming from unclear boundaries and role ambiguity. Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) attribute this as an effect due to a shift into a higher level of the organization having interpersonal impact, organizational impact, and emotional impact. This finding, described by Gonzalez (1997, pp. 19-20) as the inherent conflict in the role, function, and expectations of the principalship and by Bischoff (1990) as role hierarchy, was deemed by the respondents as being bound by context, sometimes causing conflicts, what Hart (1994) explained as "a classic tension between integration and creativity." Bonnie described her first year as a time of "huge learning"(12, 6-7). The novice principals appeared to face "destabilization events and the restabilization influence of socialization (Hart, 1994)." Their experiences support Anderson's (1991) view that the principalship is a service of formally appointed leaders in established social organizations (p. 1) and, that during and following succession, there is a period of adjustment when tensions between forces may alter the behaviors of the new principal when dealing with the individuals related to the school setting.

Sense of self. The data lent credence to Hart's (1993) perspective that effective succession needs to look at both how the succession principal impacts the environment and how the community impacts upon the principal. When asked if becoming a principal had affected these new principals personally, the respondents gave mixed responses. Anne and Betty reported no effect. Bonnie reported that the only discernible difference was in her practice due to greater awareness of what the principalship entailed. Alice and Bill revealed changes in their approach to individuals, manifested by greater tolerance and greater political astuteness. Aaron recognized enhanced knowledge of self and comfort in his actions within the professional community. For the majority, this organizational socialization resulted in heightened personal awareness of beliefs and behaviors. The data suggest that these effects were more intuitive than deliberate.

Summary of the Discussion of the Findings

Discussion of the findings in relationship to the literature were presented in this chapter. This information was categorized according to the themes emerging from the findings: (a) beginning principals' profile; (b) aspirations; (c) reputation, advocacy, and fit; (d) sources of training, (e) strategies for socialization, and (f) factors influencing succession.

Aspirations to the principalship were not discussed as a prearrival factor in the literature. I found that individuals who had the principalship as a long term personal goal instituted career planning strategies and structured their professional pursuits to obtain awareness, exposure, and experience in leadership activities.

Generally, the findings in the present study and the literature were congruent in regard to reputation, advocacy, and fit. There was agreement that these prearrival factors were important indicators leading to follower sensemaking and follower acceptance prior to succession. Reputation appeared to be perceived by the novice principals as the most powerful element.

The findings and the literature presented similar information on sources of training and development resulting in preparedness of beginning principals. The mechanisms providing preparation were (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous assignments, (c) support from Central Office personnel, (d) accessing contacts and networks, (e) learning from school communities, (f) learning from mistakes, (g) serving with professional organizations, and (h) university study. The data indicate that Group One and Group Two ranked these forms of obtaining knowledge in different patterns of preference. Serving with professional organizations was a training ground implied, however, not distinct in the literature. Ongoing instruction, support, and assistance provided during postsuccession as a source of training is not evident in the literature.

The literature and the respondents delineated similar strategies for manifesting principalship socialization. The processes; (a) observation, (b) questioning, (c) informal meetings, (d) listening, (e) discussion, and (f) reflective thought; represent a blending of theoretical knowledge with the reality of practice and lead to the development of a personalized style of leadership.

Personal beliefs, personal style, personal traits, respecting traditions, school demographics, unresolved issues, and sense of self were factors influencing succession emerging from the analysis which confirmed the information in the literature. However, approach to change and predecessor's disposition were findings denoted by the respondents as additional factors having significant influence on their successions.

An overview of the discussion of the findings in relationship to the literature is provided in Table 2 (see pp. 81-82). This summary presents the findings, supporting literature, contradicting literature, and new contributions to succession theory.

Overall, there was general agreement between the respondents and the literature. All of the participants reported feeling well-prepared and ready to take on the principalship. Bonnie captured the essence of preparedness for these first year principals: "There isn't anything that I don't feel that I didn't know about. I don't think we have the depth for some of the things but I'm not sure how that can be provided because that is so individual."

The next chapter addresses responses to the research questions and conclusions, recommendations, and reflections regarding this study.

Table 2

Summary of the Discussion of the Findings

Findings	Supporting Literature	Contradicting Literature	Not in Literature
1. Aspirations			
• Self-direction in pursuit of leadership opportunities			xx
• Succession planning			xx
2. Reputation, advocacy, and fit	Miskel & Cosgrove (1984)		
• Sensemaking	Fauske & Ogawa (1985)		
• Follower acceptance	Macmillan (1993)		
3. Sources of training			
• Learning by doing	Blumberg & Greenfield (1980), Bogue (1985)		
• Previous assignments	Bolman & Deal (1992), Macmillan (1993), Bogue (1985)		
• Formal preservice training	Gonzalez (1997), Milstein & Kruger (1997), Cembrowski (1997)	Bolman & Deal (1992)	
• Preservice training as a contribution to reputation			xx
• Central Office	Restine (1997)		
• Central Office initiative, new principals support group			xx
• Contacts and networks	Restine (1997)		
• Learning from communities	Bischoff (1990), Miskel & Cosgrove (1984)		
• Learning from mistakes	Blumberg & Greenfield (1980), Gonzalez (1997)		
• Professional organizations			xx
• University study	Cembrowski (1997), Restine (1997)	Anderson (1991), Bolman & Deal (1992)	

Findings	Supporting Literature	Contradicting Literature	Not in Literature
4. Strategies for socialization	Restine (1997), Hart (1993)		
5. Factors influencing socialization			
• Personal beliefs, style, and traits	Miskel & Cosgrove (1984), Hart & Bredeson (1996)		
• Approach to change	Miskel & Cosgrove (1984)		Partially
• Predecessor's disposition			xx
• School demographics	Anderson (1991), Brock & Grady (1995)		
• Unresolved issues	Gonzalez (1997), Bischoff (1990), Hart (1994)		
• Sense of self	Hart (1993)		

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter is divided into three sections: (a) responses to the research questions and conclusions, (b) recommendations for practice and theory, and (c) personal reflections.

Responses to the Research Questions and Conclusions

The research was guided by one main research question and two related sub-problems. The following addresses the sub-problems first and then offers responses to the main research question.

Sub-Problem 1

How prepared are new principals who do not participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship?

Group One respondents stated that they had been well-prepared for the principalship. These new principals felt that they possessed the tools necessary to administer their own schools and to fit into the context of their new school settings. They attributed their preparedness to informal training occurring prior to, at, and following succession. In all cases, this informal training took place while serving in their first principalship, in previous assignments, and through continuing support provided by a number of resources.

Group One respondents listed (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous leadership positions, (c) support from Central Office personnel, (d) accessing contacts and networks, (e) learning from school communities, (f) learning from mistakes, (g) serving with professional organizations, and (h) university study as the main contributors to their leadership training and development.

These participants stated that the greatest contributor to preparedness was knowledge gained while actually performing the roles and responsibilities as first time principals, what they termed "learn by fire," "a school of hard knocks," and "doing it."

While in the position, they used a variety of strategies to garner support, assistance, and confirmation, for example, observation, questioning, informal meetings, and reflective thought.

Equally powerful for these new principals was competence acquired while serving in previous leadership positions. They attributed their knowledge about the day-to-day running of a school and how to deal with people as a direct result of learning through previous experiences in a variety of assignments and leadership roles because this type of involvement gave them concrete examples for reference. Alice summed up the benefits of previous leadership experiences: "Nothing came as a surprise. Nothing shocked me. Whereas if I had never been an assistant principal, there would have been tons of stuff" which would have caught her off guard.

Another source of leadership training mentioned by the respondents was support from Central Office personnel. This support was available to the new principals upon and following succession. For Alice, the new principals support group was deemed crucial as it provided timely, salient, and individualized ongoing assistance, opportunities to network with other newly-appointed administrators, and a venue to "just talk."

Accessing contacts and networks from within and without the school jurisdiction served to furnish these novice principals with fundamental and essential knowledge to guide their practice. This source appeared to be utilized following succession thereby critical to preparedness for accomplishing specific tasks and to negate feelings of isolation.

Learning from school communities was effected prior to, at, and following entry into the school setting. The respondents felt that performing the tasks associated with getting to know the individuals inherent to their situation required training in "people skills." They attributed their preparation to personal style, learning by doing, and experiences in past assignments. They emphasized the importance of being apprised of the "real" community demographics before assuming the school's leadership because these data shape their actions upon entry.

Group One respondents accentuated the importance of learning from mistakes. They utilized techniques to gather feedback and process information such as (a) listening, (b) informal meetings, and (c) reflective thought to assess their own performance and to reverse decisions when necessary. Learning from mistakes was deemed a forceful application for learning.

University study and service in other professional organizations furnished beneficial training for Aaron prior to succession.

The overall feelings of participants in Group One regarding their succession experiences were ease, challenge, and fulfilment.

I concluded that these novice principals had obtained the necessary training and development for effecting their roles through informal means. They appeared ready and prepared to perform tasks associated with the principalship. They projected a willingness to continue learning, to involve stakeholders, and to seek out advice and assistance. I sensed that these beginning principals fit comfortably into their new career group and were confident in their abilities to do the job.

Sub-Problem 2

How prepared are new principals who participate in formal principal training and development courses for the principalship?

Group Two participants stated that they had entered the field of educational administration feeling well-prepared for the principalship. These novice principals explained that they had been provided knowledge about, exposure to, and practice with a broad range of elements related to the principalship through formal and informal training prior to, at, and following succession. In all cases, informal training took place while serving in their first principalship, in previous assignments, and through continuing support provided by a number of sources. Formal preservice training was achieved through a Principalship Training and Development Course provided by their school jurisdiction.

Group Two mentioned the sources providing them with the most influential learning as (a) learning in previous assignments, (b) formal training, (c) learning by doing, (d) learning from school communities, (e) support from Central Office personnel, (f) accessing contacts and networks, and (g) university study.

The three participants in this group stated that the most powerful contributor to their preparedness for the principalship was informal training obtained while performing in previous teaching assignments and leadership positions. They attributed their knowledge about managing a school and dealing with its various communities as a direct result of past performance. The strategies utilized to gain this training were observation of former administrators, opportunities to provide leadership to colleagues, and dialogue. All felt that they had developed a personal leadership style by integrating previous learning within the context of their particular situations.

Secondly, preservice formal training was deemed extremely valuable to these novice principals as it served to confirm beliefs, provide specialized knowledge, and assist in executing certain responsibilities of principals. It provided an element of awareness of issues to be faced by new principals along with strategies for addressing these. As well as an opportunity to develop and practice skills, it served as a venue for establishing and developing valuable networks judged to be a mainstay for accessing and verifying behaviors and actions.

The third training ground for the principalship for Group Two participants was learning by doing, performing the roles and responsibilities as first time principals, what Bonnie termed "on-the-job." On-the-job situations provided the depth and understanding required to make the best choices for the school's particular situation and communities. While in the position, they used a variety of methods to garner support, assist, and confirm their practices, for example, reading, observation, questioning, listening, dialogue, and reflective thought.

Learning from school communities provided the respondents with knowledge about the culture existing in their particular schools. Training in interpersonal skills was identified as a requirement to fit into, glean information from, and work with the individuals in their school settings. Group Two principals relied on the stakeholders to guide them in understanding the reasons why their schools had been organized as they were. Strategies employed by these beginning principals included informal meetings, listening, observing, and gathering demographic data.

The beginning principals in Group Two capitalized on further learning opportunities provided by Central Office personnel. They mentioned the ongoing training available to them through the new principals support group, professional development sessions, and one-on-one assistance as being especially valuable when broaching specific tasks (e.g., budgeting and personnel issues.)

Accessing contacts and networks was a resource prevalent in the practices of these novice principals. They relied on colleagues, former administrators, staff working with community agencies, and peers as an avenue for obtaining assistance.

University study provided beneficial training for one respondent. Betty valued the training in reflective thought she had received indicating that this process had become a part of her daily practice.

The new principals constituting this group all felt that they were well-prepared and "ready for the job." For them, the transition had been "very comfortable, amazingly easy." All enjoyed the challenges, recognizing that a school and its demands remain dynamic.

I agreed with the principals in Group Two. I concluded that these novice principals were secure in their approaches to the principalship. I felt that this group of participants conveyed confidence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. My view is that they had obtained the majority of their preparation through informal mechanisms and that formal training had served to provide confirmation, awareness, and knowledge in various areas for different participants.

Main Research Question

How do newly appointed principals with preservice training view their preparedness for effecting their roles and responsibilities within an established social organization as compared with newly appointed principals with no formal training?

It appears that there is congruence between how these two groups of novice principals viewed their preparedness for the principalship. Overall, they felt that they possessed the knowledge, personal attributes, and ingenuity required to be competent administrators. Both Group One and Group Two principals expressed a high level of confidence in their abilities to perform their newly-assigned duties.

Aspirations to the principalship were explored in this study. Participants gave mixed responses: three novice principals acknowledged having actively sought the principalship whereas three reported being approached and offered the position. The participants who recognized ascension to the principalship as a long standing personal goal had invited opportunities to effect leadership tasks, had obtained informal training, and had offered their candidacies for leadership assignments prior to being selected.

Prearrival factors were seen as critical elements for all these beginning principals. Both groups reported similar backgrounds as educators; substantial field experiences, demonstrated personal successes, and recognition of exemplary performance; forming the basis of their established reputations of competence, diligence, and suitability. Principals with no formal training made more references to performance prior to entry as the reason for being chosen for the principalship whereas principals with formal training included the dimension of exposure during the period of training as an added venue for recognition of personal leadership knowledge and skills.

Many ways of acquiring training were discerned from the data. In accordance with the literature, informal training superseded formal training in its perceived effectiveness as preparation for the principalship. It appeared that the mechanisms used to gain knowledge, training, and experience were similar for both groups, however, clear differences were

noted in the importance and preference placed on different modes and approaches by each group. Group One participants identified (a) learning by doing, (b) learning in previous assignments, (c) support from Central Office personnel, (d) accessing contacts and networks, (e) learning from school communities, (f) learning from mistakes, (g) serving with professional organizations, and (h) university study as the main contributors to their leadership training and development. Group Two respondents prioritized (a) learning in previous assignments, (b) formal training, (c) learning by doing, (d) support from Central Office personnel, (e) learning from school communities, (f) accessing contacts and networks, and (g) university study as the venues providing them with the most beneficial learning. Table 3 summarizes the rankings given by the two sets of principals. The data may suggest differences in preferred personal learning styles, personal traits and characteristics, and the nature of prior training experiences.

Table 3

Frequency of Mention of Sources of Principalship Training

Mechanism	Group One	Group Two
Learning by doing	1	3
Learning in previous assignments	2	1
Formal training	--	2
Support from Central Office	3	5
Accessing contacts and networks	4	6
Learning from school communities	5	4
Learning from mistakes	6	--
Serving with professional organizations	7	--
University study	8	7

As presupposed, the major difference between the two groups related to the preservice training program received by newly appointed principals in Group Two. The Principalship Training and Development Course served in adding a dimension of awareness, providing these principals with a greater sense of what to expect once in the

job. This resulted in heightened self-confidence due to exposure and a feeling of having done this before. Consequently, fewer issues seemed to be unexpected, requiring consultation or on-on-one assistance.

Although all of the participants expressed a high level of confidence in their abilities to perform tasks, the principals in Group Two seemed to possess a higher degree of ease in broaching budgeting, for example, whereas Group One principals often mentioned utilizing initial strategies and accessing resources to gain information and bolster knowledge of processes before tackling the assignment. Conversely, Group One principals appeared to be more firm in regard to decision-making and initiating changes in their school settings. This may suggest that technical socialization, learning the job related elements of the role of the principalship, is approached comprehensively during preservice training. This may also suggest that principals with no training felt more comfortable initiating and implementing change.

All participants reported feeling comfortable working with their school communities. For some, their school setting represented a diametrically different set of demographics from settings they worked in while in previous assignments. Depending on a number of factors and variables, the role of the principalship was manifested differently to reflect the uniqueness inherent in each school setting.

An important finding brought to light by both groups suggested that the predecessor principal played an important role in succession. Organizational socialization experiences, shaped in part by their predecessors' disposition, impacted the successor's entry and initial actions. The data suggest that predecessor's role contributed to sensemaking for the stakeholders already in the school setting and the new principal entering the situation.

It appeared that these first year principals appeared more concerned with working with people than completing tasks and assignments attributed to the role of the principalship. This supports the contention that professional socialization can be learned

through formal and informal training whereas organizational socialization processes are more intuitive, perhaps a manifestation of the traits and qualities brought to the job by the principals.

It is recognized that some components of the principalship can be learned prior to entering the role of principal while others cannot. As evidenced in these findings, training occurs prior to, at, and following succession. Informal training, a practice effected at the school and district levels of organizations, was seen as the most useful contributor to preparedness for newly appointed administrators. Preservice principalship training was seen as valuable, beneficial, and desirable, it was not viewed as a critical requirement for those taking on the role. Therefore, it can be concluded that preservice training in the principalship is only one of the ways to provide aspirant principals with some theoretical knowledge and some practical experiences in preparation for the role. The concept of formal training can be viewed as a means of career development encompassing a broad picture of the principalship.

Recommendations

Succession is a natural, regular, and widespread occurrence, providing unique perspectives on leadership and bringing leadership to the surface of organizational consciousness at all levels (Hart, 1993, p.1). As the principal is a key figure in school effectiveness, it would stand to reason that a conscious effort be made by school jurisdictions to prepare the right leaders to meet the challenges they will face.

Recommendations for Practice

Ten recommendations for enhancing preparation opportunities for aspirant and beginning principals emerged from the conclusions.

1. As informal training remains the most beneficial form of preparation for the principalship, aspirant principals must be presented with multiple opportunities to learn about and practice leadership in a number of venues and settings. Along with designated

leadership responsibilities to be effected under the guidance of experienced practitioners, other means of providing informal training should be explored, for example, job shadowing, mentorship, job rotation, and exchange.

School jurisdictions should initiate job shadowing as a structured, long-term, and comprehensive component of training programs. As observation was found to be a powerful form of personal learning, shadowing experienced principals would provide opportunities for aspirant principals to watch as the roles and responsibilities of the principalship are manifested. Opportunities to discuss practices and to take part in activities perhaps not available in an individual's current setting would expose potential administrators to different situations on which they could draw upon in the future. The exercise could be formalized by adding a reflective assignment to personalize learning.

School jurisdictions should implement mentorship programs. Formal mentorship involves the development of an intense, consistent, and professionally-centered relationship in which the veteran principal guides, advises, and assists the novice in any number of ways. Although mentorship pairings had been established by Central Office personnel in this jurisdiction, the resulting relationships described by the participants appeared quite loose, unstructured, and only marginally beneficial. In general, the participants suggested that a mentor of their own choosing with a similar personal style would have lead to greater contact between the parties, increased trust, and sustained collaboration.

School jurisdictions should incorporate job rotation as a training opportunity. Ongoing learning can be achieved by providing exposure to multiple occasions for practice. As vertical movement in the field of educational administration is somewhat limited in the reality of today's economic crunch, fewer assistant principalships are available. Job rotation as a leadership opportunity would provide latitude for effecting practice. This model remains relatively unexplored in the educational system.

School jurisdictions should encourage exchanges within the school district and among other educational institutions. Opportunities to experience other ways of conducting "business" would inject new enthusiasm and energy, providing possibilities for change.

2. School jurisdictions should continue offering preservice Principalship Training and Development courses in educational administration to aspirant principals. This training enhances theoretical learning and encourages experiential learning. It provides awareness, exposure, knowledge, and practice in elements of the principalship. As well, it is a venue with a proclivity for establishing and developing networks of valued and trusted colleagues for support and assistance.

3. School jurisdictions should offer professional development opportunities during the postsuccession stage of the principalship. The need for leadership training and development continues after an individual enters the position of principal.

The school district in which this study was conducted should continue the new principals support group. Other districts not having a "new principals support group" should encourage its formation. The monthly meetings organized by leadership consultants were deemed excellent opportunities to provide informal training and development in a timely fashion, while "on the job."

School districts should increase professional development opportunities to include practitioners from other jurisdictions and other fields. Training and development restricted to one perspective limits the realm of information available to participants. Hearing a different voice may open areas for study and provide ideas to implement.

All educational organizations should structure professional development sessions to include 'time to talk." Informal opportunities to build team, interact with colleagues, and share ideas result in meaningful exchange and must not be overlooked as a compelling instructional strategy.

4. The school district should include organizational socialization as a component of training and as a topic for discussion with the new principals support group. As each school has its own history, every new principal will interact with the established communities indigenous to a particular school setting differently. In preparation, all principals, especially newly-appointed principals, in succession situations should receive a comprehensive demographic profile of their assigned school setting during the prearrival phase. This profile should include data about the organization and operation of the school, facts regarding the community in which the school is situated, and information about the individuals already in place in the organization. A comprehensive profile would serve to alert new principals of factors which may affect successor actions upon entry.

5. Leadership programs offered by universities and school jurisdictions should include a succession framework which must be shared with beginning principals. Hart and Bredeson (1996) suggested that such a blueprint would assist individuals in understanding the succession process and provide them with heightened awareness of expectations prior to, at, and following principal transition. This broad look at the series of events and processes would contribute insight and structure to succession as it unfolds for the beginning principals and may alleviate some of the apprehensions and uncertainties felt as they enter into established organizations.

6. Overall professional socialization was not a concern for the participants in this study. However, a number of respondents mentioned budgeting and decisions about technology as areas giving them difficulty. In order to address these issues, the school jurisdiction should review and evaluate its present mode of disseminating such information. Principals are generally wise people, eager learners. The shroud of mystery attributed to these emerging responsibilities could be removed by reviewing the current practices utilized to broach these topics and incorporating better processes to communicate information, to provide advice and support, and to clarify requirements. This problem may be an effect of site-based management and an examination of this model may be in order.

7. School jurisdictions should provide leadership support during the prearrival phase of succession. Most new principals spend many hours of their summer vacation in their new school settings. An on-site visit from a leadership consultant during that time may be advantageous to the new leader as it would provide a different perspective from which to view the school in a relaxed environment.

8. All involved in principals succession should assist in maximizing the creation of networks and support groups. Seeking assistance from colleagues, Central Office personnel, other professionals, and individuals within the school community was hailed as a lifesaver for the respondents. Formal and informal opportunities to meet and interact with others would serve as the venue for establishing strong links for diverse purposes. Many new principals emphasized a need to make connections between theory and practice.

9. Professional organizations, government, and Central Office senior staff must clarify the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. As Macmillan (1993) stated, new principals tend to want to do everything. New principals must recognize that the expectations of the principalship are not clearly defined, sometimes becoming overwhelming and causing conflicts. All respondents spoke of role hierarchy and its impact on how they saw their duties as principals. They mentioned that in some cases they were torn between being loyal to their teachers and being loyal to the greater organization. The perspectives are in conflict, causing tension for these new administrators. It is necessary to seek resolution of outstanding issues and unclear boundaries.

10. Instructors should vary instructional strategies utilized in formal and informal training. The study revealed that delivery of information during training sessions consisted of presentations followed by discussions. Although beneficial and constructive, the adult learners stated that they would have benefited from more variety in the instructional processes utilized. They felt that their learning would have been pushed to a higher level if periods of unstructured dialogue had been included in the format. They felt a need to debrief personal experiences, address emergent issues, ask questions, and share with

colleagues; in other words, "time to talk" to clarify, elaborate, extend, and personalize learning. Collaborative strategies such as brainstorming were mentioned as possibilities permitting learners to lessen competitiveness, appreciate different perspectives, and take risks. Further, participants wanted a time to share assignments and discuss other participants' approaches to dealing with topics, "another way." This finding has implications for all who interact with learners. People learn in different ways. Preferred personal learning style should be considered at all levels of education. Any strategy resulting in constructing meaning should be valued.

Recommendations for Theory and Future Research

Seven recommendations for principal succession theory and for future research on novice principal preparedness resulted from the findings of this study. Three recommendations deal specifically with contributions to principal succession theory. Four recommendations identify areas requiring further research.

1. Develop a model of principal succession to share with aspirant and newly-appointed principals. This would serve as a tool for individuals to evaluate their own preparedness for entering the field of educational administration. As a result, individuals could discern personal areas of strength and areas of need. Figure 2 provides such a model. In addition to Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) prearrival factors, I found five additional elements that need to be considered by aspirant principals: (a) aspirations, (b) predecessor's disposition, (c) community, (d) leadership training and development, and (e) service with professional organizations. Furthermore, Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) succession effects lack the notion of postsuccession training.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model for Principal Succession

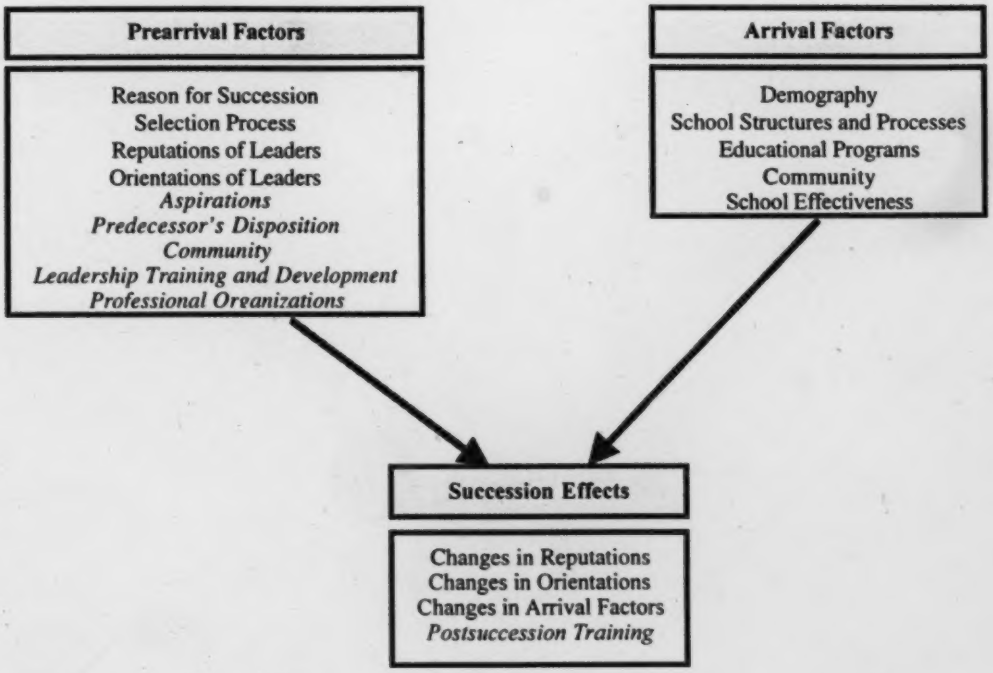

Figure 2. Adaptation and extension of Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) Model for Leader Succession
Note: *Italics* denote factors not described in the literature.

2. The findings in this study confirm the impact of prearrival factors in the succession process. In addition to the prearrival factors outlined in Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) model, aspirations of new leaders, predecessor's disposition, and information about community must be considered during the preentry stage. Successor actions were influenced by these elements. As a result of this study, Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) prearrival factors have been adapted to include additional constituents (see Figure 2.) Consequently, information seeking processes could be devised, for example, (a) a questionnaire to assist the access of predecessor knowledge, and (b) an invitation to meet the school communities and to interact with school staff.

3. As learning does not stop upon entry into the position of principal, ongoing training and support contribute to succession effects. As noted in this study, the strategies utilized for ongoing learning constituted the major portion of training for both groups of principals. Postsuccession training must be added to Miskel and Cosgrove's (1984) model to make it more comprehensive.

4. Training programs such as internships, exchanges, job rotation, and lateral job movement are used extensively in succession planning in the business world. Such initiatives could be adapted and added to leadership development options in educational settings. At present, the means available to aspirant administrators have been limited, resulting in minimal utilization of such meritous strategies. Studies of the benefits of these options would contribute to the understanding of the succession process and add to the repertoire of choices available for training and development.

5. An area for further study is the effects of staggering principalship appointments throughout the school year rather than, as is presently practised, a general "shuffle" at the end of the school year. For new principals, saliency of training was partially determined by timing during the school year. It is recognized that certain periods such as school opening and school closing are hectic times for educators. Transition occurs at precisely these times. Staggered appointments may reduce the number of factors and issues needing the immediate attention of new principals. This option may shift the succession experience to a more relaxed period.

6. Six novice principals constituted the respondent group accessed in this study. Each group of three represented two female and one male administrator. These groups paralleled the gender make-up for the 1997-98 school year for the population of newly-appointed principals in the jurisdiction studied here. Therefore, for the 1997-98 school year, 67% of new administrators were female while 33% were male. Interestingly, 27% of the newly-appointed principals had received no training in the principalship while 73% had

preservice training provided by the school district. A study of the demographics of new principals would provide a profile of beginning principals; shed light on desirable attributes of novice administrators, and may discern a current trend prevalent to this career group.

7. This school jurisdiction carries out an extensive confirmation process on all newly-appointed principals. As part of the information gathering, a survey is administered to the new principal's staff, students, parents, and members of the immediate community. These results may, upon analysis, identify patterns of perceptions held by various stakeholder groups. A study of the results may contribute to the current knowledge on new principal succession and may flag areas of common concern.

Personal Reflections

This section presents my personal thoughts. It is speculative and goes beyond the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

At the end of this investigation, I recognized similarities among the succession experiences of these six first year principals and my memories of my initial year as an administrator. I could relate to their dispositions with empathy, understanding, and pride. I recognized that all beginning principals go through a period of construction, when the knowledge of theory is blended with the reality of practice. The first year is a rite of passage when significant thought is expended on role clarification and personal growth. Principals manifest these characteristics differently, therefore, the principalship is a very personal and individual business. Only through experience and reflection can they develop their own administrative style. I suspect transition would have been eased for novice principals had they possessed a greater awareness of what to expect as they lived through the process. I know that I would have benefited from a comprehensive view and understanding of the factors and events embodying succession.

I recognized that the participants had a need to talk, to share their experiences and feelings. When I contacted them to arrange for interviews, they were very accommodating and welcoming, hinting that they could contribute substantially to my study. The first time

for these novice principals transpired in unique ways, experiences they wanted to share in a safe environment. This leads me to believe that each individual needed to be given many opportunities to discuss his or her adventure in different venues, essentially debrief with others who could understand and empathize. These individuals had an urgency to tell their stories.

It became obvious that these newly-appointed principals were self-directed and true lifelong learners. They require ongoing learning, growth, and challenge to approach their work with energy and enthusiasm. They showed strength of character and high levels of confidence in personal abilities. Whatever the task, they were eager to accomplish it often using problem-solving models including information gathering, determining options, and taking action. They were open to feedback, recognizing that part of the learning process is making mistakes or poor decisions. Accepting their own humanness was an admirable trait possessed by these individuals.

It must be remembered that organizations are groups of people. First year principals expressed that professional socialization, effecting the roles and responsibilities related to educational administration, can be learned through formal and informal training. However, the skills required to effect organizational socialization, learning to work with the individuals and communities endemic to the particular school setting, appeared to be an intuitive manifestation of personal qualities and traits. Working with people can be facilitated if the successor is provided with comprehensive information pertinent to the situation, utilizes "people skills," and "good old common sense."

The principalship entails roles and responsibilities inherent to the job. No matter how knowledgeable or experienced an individual may be, there will always be surprises. A first year principal has no choice but to deal with these. As mentioned by the respondents, they accessed a number of resources to assist in broaching these. All were

adamant in their need to network, to form support groups, and to use them. It became obvious that these individuals preferred working collaboratively with colleagues, and that cooperative efforts reduced feelings of isolation.

It is noteworthy that prearrival factors were deemed very important to the participants in this study. There is fear and apprehension on the part of new principals as to how they will be received by the stakeholders. In fact, these factors were so important to these respondents that their past experiences, reputations, and beliefs served as the descriptors to define who they were and what they could do. Predecessor disposition was a factor I had not considered as affecting succession. This determined the actions of the successor upon entry as it contributed to sensemaking on the parts of the new principals and the individuals within the school settings. This will be a consideration for me as I return to the principalship the next school year and a consideration for when I am succeeded by others.

All of the principals mentioned issues which needed resolution. Are principals educational leaders, or administrative managers, or a combination of both? Direction regarding where a principal's loyalties lie, whether with the school board or the jurisdiction's teaching staff, during periods of conflict must be clarified. Principals fall somewhere in limbo between the two groups. How can resolution be sought? This was beyond the scope of the present study, but well worth pursuing.

There is much in the principalship that can be enjoyed. Positively impacting the lives of children, celebrating successes, reaching beyond the ordinary; there are many opportunities to "make a difference." Novice principals must also see the good things they have accomplished and acknowledge the worthwhile and constructive changes made in the lives of students resulting from their involvement.

As I prepare for my second succession experience, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to investigate this phenomenon and to glean insight into how it is effected differently by individuals in different school settings. I know that I am approaching the whole quite differently because I have awareness and understanding prior to beginning the process. I know that I will do some things differently because I have a theoretical framework grounded in experience to draw upon.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

My name is Connie Murphy and I am presently working on my MEd at the University of Alberta in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Through my experience as an educator, I have learned that there is much to learn from others. I would like to invite you to participate in a study regarding the perceptions of preparedness of newly appointed principals for their succession experiences. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of preparedness of newly appointed principals who have received formal principal leadership and development training and newly appointed principals who have not received formal training prior to entering the field.

In this study, you are requested to meet with me for one 45 - 60 minute session and will be asked to respond to some questions about your succession experience. Our conversation will be recorded, the contents will be transcribed, and I will give you a copy for your approval.

Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be confidential and there will be no risks to you associated with your participation. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your wishes will be honored.

I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to talk and share your insights. If you have any questions, please contact me. I can be reached by telephone at (403) 468-6642 or by email at cmurphy@connect.ab.ca. In addition, I have a mailbox in the Graduate Mail Room (7-167P) under my name, Connie Murphy. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. José da Costa, at (403) 492-5868 should you have any questions or concerns.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. Thank you for your assistance.

_____ _____

(Signature of participant) (Date)

_____

(Phone number)

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

1. What is your official job title for the 1997-98 school year?
2. Briefly describe your academic background, your professional experience, and your previous leadership experiences.
3. Was becoming a principal one of your personal goals?
4. What did you have to do to achieve this goal?
5. Did you receive preservice training in the principalship?
6. How did you learn the technical aspects of the job?

   - conflict resolution
   - budgeting
   - decision-making
   - communication
   - staff evaluation
   - disciplinary approaches
   - shadowing
   - networking
   - politics
   - reflective thought
   - mentorship

7. How did you learn the social aspects of the job, dealing with the various communities of the school?
8. Tell me about the school setting in which you entered.
9. Did you make any changes to the school and its organization when you began?

   - organization
   - operation
   - professional development

10. Did you change because you became the principal of the school? How did the appointment change you? Give examples.
11. Please share your general thoughts on your entry into the principalship?
    - Did you feel that you had sufficient preparation to do the job?
    - In what areas did you feel ready to take on the challenge?
    - In what areas did you feel unprepared?

12. What areas would you have liked to explore prior to entering the principalship?
13. Would you make any suggestions to those engaged in principal training and development which would assist new principals in making the transition into the principalship?
14. If you could change the way you approached something in your present job, what would that be?
15. Do you have any advice for first-time principals?
16. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your succession experience?

Appendix C

Sample of Partial Interview Transcript

C Alice, give me some examples of the changes you made to the school and it's organization when you began.

A The first thing I did was say, this is a K-9 school. We will not have things like separate assemblies. We will put everything together. So we did family groupings. And take the kids into the gym in family groupings. And that separates the junior highs who are sitting at the back making fun of the little kids. So we did that, we used the family groupings for a variety of things like we put the kids in family groupings to make decorations for the concert. Junior high was involved in the concert which probably happened for the first time. More fundamentally, I hired a teacher who is 0.5 teaching and 0.5 special needs, to coordinate the special needs and to coordinate the aide time, the work that's done in pull-out. She does pull-out herself and she organizes the aide pull-out time. We increased core time, core subject time, in junior high and introduced USSR. We reduced the number of splits as much as we could. Some of these changes are changes any principal would have made just given numbers, higher numbers gives more flexibility and technically I am overstaffed, but that's one of the problems in a K-9 school when you have to provide for two separate programs, you end up being overstaffed. I like that flexibility in this school-based budgeting and with the new superintendent, that I can just go ahead if I choose to spend the money that way on an extra teacher, or a 0.5 teacher time, that's my decision and I'm doing what's best for the school, what's best for the kids.

C How did the people at the school respond to these changes?

A For the most part, very positively. In some cases, I said, this is what's going to happen, like the assemblies being together. There was no question, it was just going to happen. It happened! The first assembly was K-9, it wasn't a very good one, but each one's gotten better. We've made it happen. A lot of the decisions were made

collaboratively. Like when we arrived the first day and looked at what our numbers were, at the end of the day we said okay, these are the numbers, how do we organize the classes? How do we divide them up? So, it wasn't imposed on people. The staff were involved. They actually set the class lists, who should go into a split, and these are the ones that shouldn't go into a split.

C You said that a lot of the kids did not have a history in the school.

A But for the ones who did. Or even, there were a couple of the kids who had come from England, and when the teachers saw their work and the quality of their work, they said these kids should probably go in the split class because they're really high. They can probably work independently. Now, so everybody was involved, it wasn't sort of imposed.

C Here's a little tricky question. How did you change because you became the principal of this school? Has the appointment changed you?

A That's a good question. I am very organized and that certainly hasn't changed. I can make decisions and that certainly hasn't changed. It's probably made me more a politician. When you're dealing more directly now it's your job, not somebody else's to be dealing with the school council, dealing with the angry parents. You know, when you're an assistant, you always have somebody else who's the ultimate authority. Now, you're the ultimate authority. You're the one that people come to. So, it's probably made me more of a politician.

C When you say that, do you mean taking more time or more deliberation to make a decision.

A No, I think I mean taking more time with people. Taking the time to chat, even if I don't have the time, taking the time to chat with my school council president, for example. More of a politician, not in the negative sense, but in the positive sense of being tactful. Being a good listener. Taking the time. I don't mean more of a politician in a negative sense.

C I take it that you mean being astute with people.

A Giving people their due. Staff too, not just....

C Please share your general thoughts on the training you received. Did you feel that you had sufficient preparation to do the job?

A Because of the former experiences, yes. Previous job experiences.

C In what areas especially did you feel ready to take on the challenge?

A I think in the day-to-day running of the school and in the dealings with people because of the AP experiences.

C Were there areas where you felt unprepared?

A Well, nothing came as a surprise. Nothing shocked me. Whereas if I had never been an AP, there would have been tons of stuff: Oh, my God! What do I do now? But because I had been an AP and I had been through a lot of it, there was nothing that came as a real surprise. There were some things that I needed more help with than others, but the help was available through Central Office personnel. And because of my network, I could access the people I knew too.

C Do you think that the kind of training you've had meets the needs of most first year principals?

A I think so because I've had such a variety of experiences that in addition to what you might learn as a teacher by observing certain principals, I consider that I had nine years of preparation for this job going back to when I was a curricular consultant. So, yes, I think that if people could have the variety of experience that I have, they would feel prepared.

C So they would feel prepared. They say principals are the best learners.

A Yeah! Oh, yeah!

C Are there any areas that you would have liked to have had the opportunity to explore prior to entering into the principalship?

A No, I think you have, for me anyway, you take it as it comes.

C Would you have any suggestions to make to those in charge of principal training and development?

A A couple of things I think they did really, really well. They had a session in June about the year start up because it helped us, so that you weren't agonizing over the summer. They've given us quite a wide variety, as broad of a perspective as we need. Timely, too. Year end is coming in a few months' time. They had scheduled something for June, and we said, no, move it up. We need to already be starting to think about these things. So they're very flexible, very thorough. I can't think of anything offhand that I would have said do in the course. This course, when we're actually in the job, is probably the most beneficial because you're right there, it's happening right now and you've got these people, hands-on, to help you with it. One of the things that you'll find interesting is that at Christmas, we were having lunch, we started our meeting in a restaurant with lunch and spent the afternoon in this restaurant. We were going around the table sort of talking about our first four months' experience. And it didn't matter who was talking and what they were saying, all the other heads at the table were nodding and that kind of a provision when you're in your first year, twelve or fourteen colleagues who are going through the same thing is wonderful because you can go to that group and you can say: This teacher is driving me nuts! And everybody knows exactly what you're talking about even though they don't know the personality and it's a place where you can confide and talk where maybe you couldn't do it with anybody else. It's a place where you can go and somebody might ask a question and it might not be specific to your situation, but you might still be able to get information from it. It's probably better at the time than prior to the job. Prior to being in the position, a lot of this stuff doesn't have enough meaning. It's when you're in the position that it's very immediate, very real, very concrete. You're in it now. And so that's why I think the support they're giving us right now, I would say it's the most valuable thing I've had this year. But I don't think doing these things a year ago would have had the same impact at all.

C I really can see what you mean. There are twelve or fourteen which is a comfortable size.

A Yes, it's not too big. We're all in the same boat together, so to speak. We meet one Wednesday afternoon a month. Sometimes we have lunch first, but it's usually 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Not after school, and that's important too, because you'd be too tired by the end of the day. This year, it's been sacrosanct time. You are there and that's it. I would never miss a session. They're too important.

C It sounds to me that that's the way to do things.

A Yes.